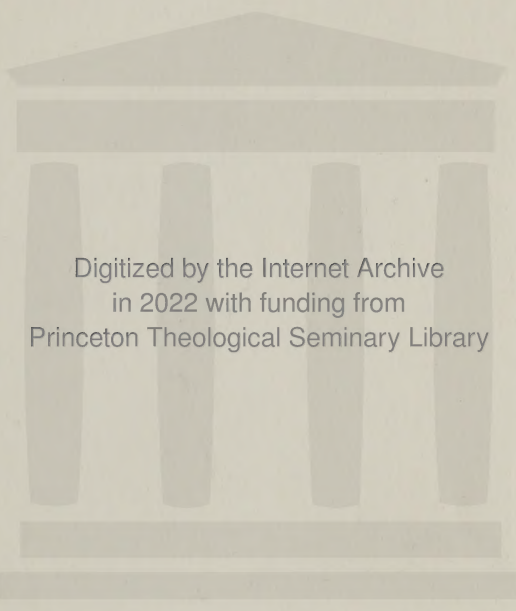
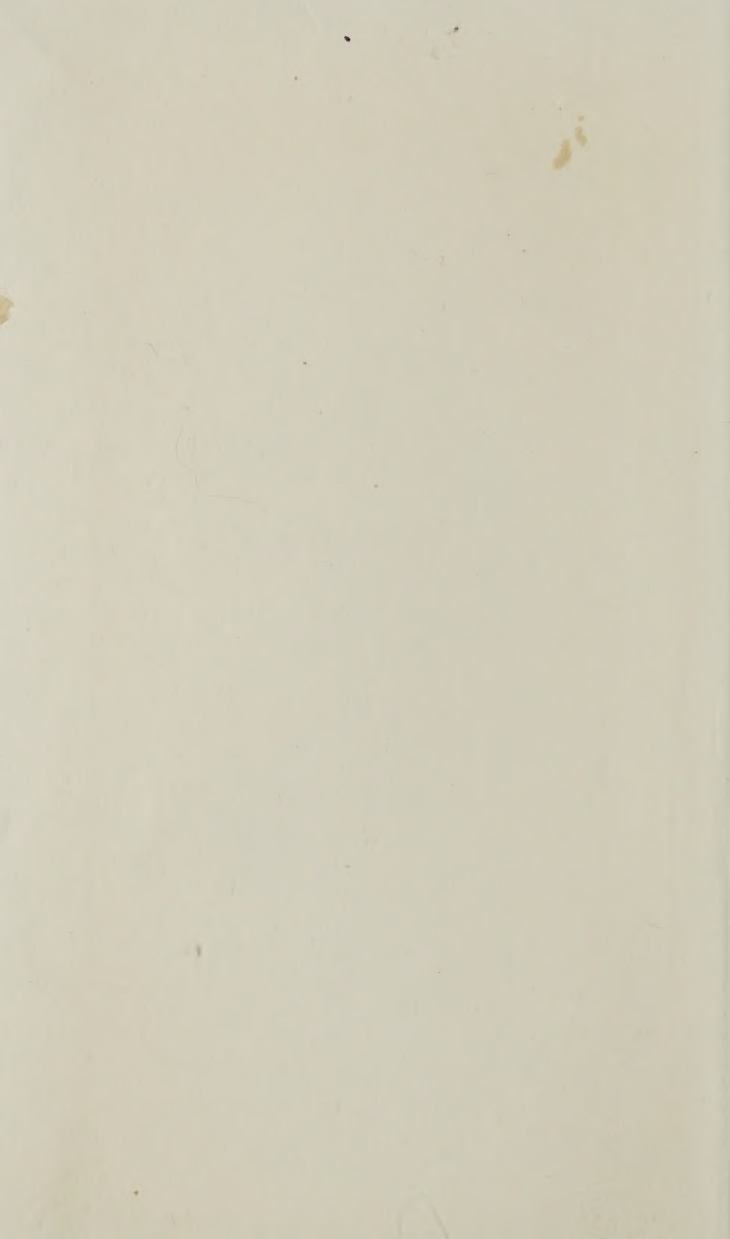


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THE COMFORTER.



THE COMFORTER;

OR,

THE HOLY SPIRIT

IN HIS GLORIOUS PERSON AND
GRACIOUS WORK.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

“GOD IS LOVE;” “OUR HEAVENLY HOME;”
“GLORIOUS GOSPEL;” &c.

Fourth Edition.

James Grant



LONDON :

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PREFACE.

THE Author of this Volume having been led to write one work on the First Person of the Glorious Trinity, under the title of "GOD IS LOVE," and another work on the Second Person of the Three-in-One, under the title of "GOD'S UNSPEAKABLE GIFT," he has felt himself to be laid under Christian obligations of the most binding nature to complete the series by a volume on the Holy Spirit. The Author fondly trusts that it is a token for good, and indicates clearly the leadings of Divine Providence, that he has had earnest requests addressed to him from various quarters, and by Christians to whom he is personally unknown, to follow up his two previous volumes by one

on the Holy Ghost. At the time that these solicitations were transmitted to him, he had made considerable progress in the preparation of the Volume which is now in the reader's hands.

The Author is deeply impressed with the conviction, that there never was a time when such a work as this was more urgently needed than it is at the present moment. No one can doubt that the Agency of the Holy Spirit in conversion, sanctification, and Christian comfort, is very much overlooked, if not altogether ignored, in many of the evangelical pulpits and publications of the day. The Author has, for a long time past, felt it to be a matter of conscience to speak personally on the subject to those of his friends, of all evangelical denominations, who are in the ministry of the Gospel, and he trusts he has not spoken altogether without effect.

The Author would, with all earnestness,

in this part of his Work, entreat those preachers of the Gospel into whose hands the Volume may come, to give hereafter a prominent place, in their pulpit ministrations, to the Glorious Person and Gracious Work of the Holy Spirit; and, if they do, they will have the happiness of seeing a measure of success attending their proclamation of the Gospel message, far surpassing anything they have hitherto witnessed. In no one case, as the Author has sought to show at some length in the body of his book, will any real spiritual blessing attend the preaching of sermons or the publication of religious works, where the Holy Spirit is not prominently recognised and honoured as a Divine Being,—co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Son. As the Personality and perfect Deity of the Holy Ghost lie at the foundation of all true holiness, and consequent comfort, the Author has dwelt at great length on these attributes of the

Spirit. To this part of his work he especially bespeaks the prayerful attention of his readers, because unless they are well grounded in the belief that the Holy Ghost is a sentient and Divine Being, they never can rightly appreciate His character or work.

And now the Author commends his Volume to the special blessing of that Holy Spirit, whose Glorious Person and Gracious Work he has humbly but earnestly sought to set forth in its pages.

London, October 20, 1858.

PREFACE
TO THE SECOND EDITION.

IN somewhat less than four months the first large edition of this Work has been exhausted. Such a measure of success has far surpassed anything which the Author could have anticipated. It would be ungracious in him were he not to take this opportunity of expressing the deeply grateful sense he entertains of the remarkably kind reception which "THE COMFORTER" has received from the leading journals of all denominations. In no single instance has any other than the voice of warm approval met his ear. No less is the Author sensible of

the debt of gratitude he owes to many of the most eminent Christians in the land, both lay and clerical, for the private letters he has received relative to the volume which is now in the hands of the reader. In these letters alone, some of them detailing cases of good being done by the book, the Author would have found an abundant reward for the time and attention devoted to its preparation. He can only repeat, with regard to this new edition, the fervent prayer with which he accompanied the first edition, namely, that the Holy Spirit may signally own and abundantly bless the book wherever it is read. He has only to add that, to prevent the volume being too bulky, it has been deemed advisable to enlarge the size of the page.

1 *February*, 1859.

THE COMFORTER.

CHAPTER I.

THE PERSONALITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

NEXT to scriptural, and therefore correct, views of God the Father, and of Jesus Christ the Son, there is no part of revealed truth so important as that which relates to the Holy Spirit. And yet, it has been long and painfully impressed on the mind of him from whose pen these pages proceed, that on the latter subject there is a mistiness about the perceptions of many of God's people, which is derogatory to the glory of the Third Person in the Trinity, most injurious to the believer's progress in holiness, and altogether incompatible with that comfort, joy, and peace which every Christian

ought to possess. I feel assured that one great cause of the obscurity which characterizes the views of the Holy Spirit, entertained by many whose piety cannot be questioned, is the melancholy extent to which the doctrine of His distinct Personality and Divine agency is ignored in the pulpit ministrations of the day, and in those religious works which emanate from the press. If the same prominence were given to the subject in the pulpit, and in periodicals and other publications devoted to theological questions, which is given to it in the oracles of God, I feel a thorough conviction that we should soon witness a great and gracious revival of real religion among the various denominations into which our Evangelical Christianity is divided. Is it not a fact as manifest as it is melancholy, that by many of our popular ministers of the Gospel, both in the Establishment and in the different Dissenting denominations, those views of the Holy Spirit to which we refer are scarcely ever expressed? You may listen to a succession of sermons, otherwise evangelical and excellent, without hearing any other than mere incidental allusions to the Holy Ghost, made in terms the most vague and unim-

pressive. And to this cause, more than to any other, I ascribe the fact that the Gospel is preached in the present day with so little power, and that conversions or growth in grace, from the perusal of religious publications, are of such rare occurrence, compared with what they have been in other days, when the messengers of mercy assigned a striking prominence, both in their pulpit ministrations and their published works, to the Person and the Work of the Holy Spirit.

To say that the subject is one of paramount importance, would be to employ language falling far short, in strength of expression, of that which the occasion requires. To ignore practically, though it may not be done theoretically, the Being and the Work of the Holy Spirit, is to lay the axe at the root of the Christian system. It denudes the Gospel of all that is vital in its glorious and gracious provisions. It renders it, in fact, no Gospel at all. Ignore the Holy Spirit in His distinct personality and Divine agency, and all that relates to the Father and the Son will cease to possess any importance whatever; for unless the Holy Ghost brings home, first to the mind, and afterwards to the heart, what the Scriptures

say concerning the first and second Persons of the glorious Trinity, these Scriptures will make no more impression, nor be productive of any more result, than the motion of the imperceptible air by which our bodies are surrounded.

It is my earnest desire—and in the following observations it will be my endeavour—to direct the special attention of all classes of Christians to a subject which I regard as infinitely important to every believer in Jesus. The two great points for our consideration will be the PERSON and the WORK of the Holy Spirit.

First of all, then, with regard to the PERSONALITY and GODHEAD of the Holy Ghost. These are points which lie at the threshold of the subject, and unless the Christian is established in them, he can have no sound or safe foundation for any of his other views. It is impossible that any one who denies or doubts the personality and divinity of the Holy Spirit, can have right views of the Spirit's work. The efficacy of His work depends entirely on His character. If He be not a person, and if in that person there be not centred all the attributes of the Godhead, He never could accomplish that work in the conversion of

sinner, and in the sanctification and the comfort of God's people, which, in the economy of redemption, has been especially assigned to Him to perform; for the work is of such a nature, as will be seen hereafter, that none but a Divine agency can be adequate to its achievement.

It is greatly to be feared that the belief that the Holy Spirit is simply an "influence," and not a person, is much more prevalent even among those whose Christianity cannot be doubted, than is generally supposed. But before I proceed farther, let me make one or two observations with the view of preventing any misconception on this point. I do not mean that, were the question put to these Christians, that they would deny the personality of the Holy Spirit, and openly acknowledge that nothing more is to be understood by the words, than that they indicate the existence of an invisible but powerful "influence." And yet, though they may not themselves be conscious of the fact, they do in reality discard the idea of the proper personality of the Holy Ghost. Let the reader pause here for a few moments, and diligently, faithfully, and prayerfully examine himself on this point. Let him ask the Holy

Spirit to aid him in the inquiry, and to render that inquiry a thoroughly searching one, as in the sight of God, whether he has, in this respect, been free from sin.

The arguments which have been employed to prove that the Holy Spirit has no personal qualities, but is simply an "influence," or power, or quality, possess at first sight a certain amount of plausibility; but when carefully examined their speciousness disappears, and they are seen to be nothing but ingenious sophisms.

Impressed with the unutterable importance of being thoroughly grounded in the great and precious truth, that the Holy Spirit is an Agent, a sentient Being, a distinct Person, in the same sense as are the Father and the Son, let me ask those into whose hands this work may fall, to pause at this part of its pages, and earnestly invoke the blessing of God on the book, that its perusal may result in their establishment in the truth of the Gospel, in regard to the doctrines taught in the Scriptures respecting the Holy Ghost.

Those who have embraced the belief that the Holy Spirit is merely an "influence" exerted on

the mind, chiefly ground that belief on the assumption, that the word "Spirit," both in the Hebrew and in the Greek, properly denotes wind or breath. It were unprofitable to enter into learned disquisitions, even were I qualified for the task, relative to the primary meaning of the word Spirit, in the Hebrew or the Greek. Let us rather seek to ascertain what is the true import of the words "Spirit," "Spirit of God," "Holy Spirit," and "Holy Ghost," as these are employed in the Scriptures. It is in this way alone that we are likely to arrive at correct conclusions.

To maintain that the Spirit must be an "influence," because we read of His being "poured out," or "breathed on" the saints in Old Testament times, or on Christ and His disciples under the New Testament dispensation,—would be obviously erroneous, because the same principle of construction would make the heart, and the spirit, and soul of man, which are usually spoken of as synonymous with the man himself, to be also severally an influence; for we often read in Scripture of pouring out the heart, the spirit, and the soul in prayer to God. Taking the words thus, literally, we should be compelled

to come to the conclusion, that a man's spirit, soul, or heart, is wind or water, because the term "breath" implies wind, and the phrase "to pour out" involves the idea of water. I am, it will be understood, speaking of that rule of construction which is based on the interpretation of terms according to their primary signification. That in the two instances in question, where the Spirit of God is spoken of by the phrase, "breathing on," or the other phrase, "pouring out," the interpretations cannot be made in accordance with the literal hypothesis, must be plain to all, inasmuch as the Spirit of God could not be compared with propriety both to wind and water, these being essentially different elements.

The expressions "breathing on" and "pouring out," with others of a similar kind, are evidently to be understood, when applied to the Holy Ghost, as merely figurative. When the Spirit of God is represented as having, at the time of the creation of the world, "moved on the face of the waters," or made the heavens and all their hosts by the "breathing of his mouth," or as having "breathed on the dry bones" in the vision of Ezekiel, or been "poured out,"—the obvious

meaning simply is, that God through His Spirit performed these acts.

But should there still, by any possibility, remain a vestige of doubt on the mind of any saint of God regarding the personality of the Spirit, because in certain portions of the sacred oracles the words “breathing,” “blow,” and others of similar import occur in speaking of the Holy Ghost, let me direct such doubting believer to the seventh verse of the fortieth chapter of Isaiah, in which it is said:—“The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it; surely the people is grass.” Nothing could be more clear than the fact that the Spirit is here spoken of as an agent, and that the blowing is but the process through which the Spirit, as that agent, produces a certain result.

But there are some who imagine that the words Holy Ghost must mean an “influence,” or power, because the word “it” is applied to the Spirit,—which, they contend, it could not be, if the Spirit were a living agent, or being, or person. Nothing could be more fallacious than this, because we see in various parts of the

Word of God, that the term "it," though strictly applicable only to things belonging to the neuter gender, is employed when speaking of men and women. Moses, for instance, in speaking of the children of Israel, whom he so often found to be an obstinate and self-willed people, says: "*It* is a stiffnecked nation." And Isaiah makes use of the same word "it," in speaking of the Jews of his day. Job, too, when referring to the Spirit which he saw—most probably in one of the visions of the night—applied the term "it" to what he beheld, though necessarily regarding the Spirit thus seen, as a sentient being. A very remarkable illustration of the use of the word "it," as applied to persons, is given in the language of our Lord Himself, in the thirty-ninth verse of the sixth chapter of the Gospel by John: He says, "And this is the Father's will which hath sent Me, that of all which he hath given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise *it* up again at the last day." Here the impersonal pronoun "it" is applied to the people of God, or the disciples of Christ by Jesus Himself.

The instances are but few in the Word of God in which the impersonal pronoun "it," or "itself,"

is applied to the Holy Spirit. The first is in the sixteenth verse of the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, wherein it said : "The Spirit *itself* beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." In the twenty-sixth verse of the same chapter the word *itself* again occurs : "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities : for we know not what we should pray for as we ought ; but the Spirit *itself* maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." Now, it will be observed that there are things predicated of the Holy Spirit in the context of these passages, which prove conclusively that it was of an agent, not of an "influence," of which the apostle spoke. A broad distinction is drawn in the first few verses between the flesh, or man's corrupt nature, and the Spirit of God ; and the Romans were exhorted to walk, not after the flesh but after the Spirit : in other words, according to the mind and monitions of the Spirit. They were reminded that they that were after the flesh minded the things of the flesh, while they that were after the Spirit minded the things of the Spirit. The contrast is still kept up between the natural man and the Holy Spirit, which would

not be appropriate, were the latter an "influence" and not a being. Besides, an "influence" could not properly be said to have "things." That clearly involves the idea of a person or intelligent agent. It will also be remarked that in the verses we have quoted, as furnishing two out of the few instances in which the words "it" or "itself" are applied to the Holy Spirit, there are things predicated, which assuredly can be said with much greater propriety of the Spirit, regarded as a Divine agent, than of the Spirit as an "influence." In the sixteenth verse, the Spirit is represented as bearing witness with our spirit. And it is not necessary to say, that we usually associate the idea of a being with the word witness. I am aware that a thing or fact may be spoken of sometimes as a witness, but such cases are exceptional, not usual. That the Holy Spirit is to be regarded as an agent in this passage is, I think, very evident from the association of the words with "our spirit." "Our spirit" demonstrably means in this place, our intelligent and conscious natures. The phrase implies that which constitutes our sentient and immortal souls. And if the word "spirit," as applied to us, is to be understood as referring

to us as sentient and rational beings, nothing could surely be more reasonable than to conclude that the term Spirit, as here employed, does not mean a mere "influence," but an agent, or person, or being.

But there is still greater ground for inferring that the word "Spirit" means a being, as used in the other verse referred to, namely, the twenty-sixth, where the term "itself," as applicable to the Holy Spirit, occurs; for it is there said that the Spirit "helpeth our infirmities, and maketh intercession for us." It cannot fail to suggest itself to every intelligent mind, that the idea of "help" received, is much more naturally associated with an agent than with an "influence." And so with regard to the word "intercession." That term implies an intercessor, and to the latter word we invariably attach the idea of a being or an agent, not an "influence." There is also an instance in the eleventh verse of the first chapter of the First Epistle of Peter, in which the impersonal pronoun "it," is applied to the Spirit, and on which those who have adopted the theory of the Holy Spirit being only an "influence" lay some stress: "Searching what, or what

manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when *it* testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." The work which is here ascribed to the Holy Spirit, called in this case the Spirit of Christ, is that of testifying, or bearing witness to, beforehand, the sufferings of Christ, and the glory which should follow. Here, again, it seems much more in harmony with the proprieties of language, that this should be predicated of an agent than of an "influence."

And this view of the passage is still further borne out by the second verse in the same chapter, where the words occur: "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied." Here the doctrine of the glorious Trinity is, to my mind, most clearly and conclusively established. God the Father is explicitly set forth as electing all who shall be finally saved, and the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, in all its sin-expiating and sanctifying power, is described as being effectually applied to the heart and conscience by the Holy

Spirit. And not only are the three distinct Persons of the Trinity here pointed out, but the parts which they respectively perform in accomplishing man's redemption, are indicated with a precision and emphasis which no conscientious and intelligent student of the passage can fail to perceive.

But to show yet more clearly how erroneous would be the conclusion that the use of the neuter gender necessarily implies that the thing spoken of literally belongs to that gender, let me direct attention to two well-known instances, not to mention others, in which the neuter gender is used, where we know, beyond all question, that the reference is to a living being, and consequently, that either the masculine or feminine gender would have been, according to all our notions of grammatical propriety, the one which should have been employed. In the first chapter of the Gospel by John, Christ is spoken of as "the Word" and as "the Light." Yet no one has ever thought of doubting, much less denying, the personality of the Lord Jesus, because He is here and in some other places spoken of as a thing, not a being.

Nor is it only with regard to the second person of the blessed Trinity that words are thus made use of which, in strict grammatical propriety, can only be employed in reference to inanimate objects. The same thing occurs in relation to God the Father himself. Our adorable Lord, in His Sermon on the Mount, immediately before He taught His disciples how to pray, enjoined them to be perfect, even as God himself is perfect ; and in doing so applied the term "*which*," instead of "who," to God. "Be ye therefore," He says, "perfect, even as your Father *which* is in heaven is perfect." And immediately Jesus adds : "Take heed that ye do not your alms before men to be seen of them, otherwise ye have no reward of your Father *which* is in heaven." And again : "Thy Father *which* seeth in secret shall reward thee openly." The word *which*, as applied to God, is again used in the next verse but one. And there is not a Christian, young or old—no one indeed that ever had a Bible in his hand—that is not cognizant of the fact, that the term "*which*"—which, strictly speaking, is applicable only to inanimate things—is employed in the Lord's Prayer, in relation to God. "Our Father

which art in heaven,” is the first sentence in that prayer. Numerous other instances of a similar kind might be given, but these will suffice to show, that in the Scriptures, the grammatical distinctions of language are not always observed with the same strictness as we expect to find them in other books, and that consequently the few exceptional cases in which the Holy Spirit is spoken of in the neuter gender, are not to be regarded as incompatible with His personality, any more than the use of terms denoting the neuter gender in reference to God the Father and Christ the Son, is to be accepted as evidence that they are not persons or agents, but influences.

As a further proof that we are not always to infer the import of particular passages of Scripture from the grammatical construction of the language employed, let me remind those who would maintain that the Holy Spirit is only an “influence,” not a person, because in one or two instances the term “it” is applied to Him,—that the same principle of construction would conduct to the conclusion, that things which every one knows to belong to the neuter gender, are spoken of, in various instances, as if they belonged

to the masculine gender. Take, for an illustration of this, that passage in Christ's Sermon on the Mount, where salt is spoken of as if it were in the masculine gender. "Ye are," says Jesus to his disciples, "the salt of the earth; but if the salt have lost *his* savour wherewith shall it be salted?" Again, in the fiftieth verse of the ninth chapter of the Gospel according to Mark, we have a similar expression, or rather the same passage, by another of the evangelists. "Salt," it is said, "is good, but if the salt have lost *his* saltness, wherewith will ye season it?" It will also be seen, on referring to the thirty-third verse of the twelfth chapter of the Gospel according to Matthew, that Christ speaks of trees as if they were of the masculine gender. "Either," he says, "make the tree good, and *his* fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and *his* fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by *his* fruit." In this one verse it will be seen that the personal pronoun *his* is three times applied to a tree. And if so, the same principle of interpretation which would lead one to reject the doctrine of the Spirit's personality, and to contend that the word only means an "influence," will compel such person to regard "salt"

and “trees” as beings or agents, because they are spoken of in some cases as if they belonged to the masculine gender. Feelings and actions are also ascribed to objects belonging to the neuter gender, and which form a part of inanimate creation. The trees are said to clap their hands for joy—the mountains to hear the voice of God and to tremble at His presence—the hills are represented as fleeing before Him—the valleys are described as vocal with their hosannahs to the great Creator—and the stars are spoken of as singing together, in one grand chorus of ecstatic delight, the high praises of their Maker. Yet no one ever contends, from these ascriptions of intelligence, feeling, and action, to trees, mountains, hills, valleys, stars, and other lifeless objects, that these objects are aught else than portions of inanimate creation. We know that the language in question is applied to them figuratively, and that they are altogether incapable of feeling or acting in the way described. It is quite a common thing for the sacred writers thus to personify inanimate objects; but no one has ever, on that account, been misled as to the real nature of the object so personified. On the same

principle, it were unreasonable, because the Spirit of God is in a few instances spoken of as an impersonal pronoun—is, in other words, spoken of as “it”—to conclude that the Holy Spirit is a mere “influence,” not a person.

Because, as already remarked, I regard it as a matter of the very highest importance, both as respects the glory of the Holy Spirit and the comfort and growth in grace of the people of God, that the believer should be thoroughly grounded in the faith of the Spirit’s personality, let me pursue the evidence of that personality a little further. With this view, let us glance at some of the many instances in which the terms “Holy Spirit,” “Holy Ghost,” the “Spirit,” or the “Spirit of God,” occur in that book which all Christians reverentially receive as an infallible revelation from God.

And first let us take some of those instances in which the simple word “Spirit,” without the adjective “Holy,” or the accompanying words “of God,” or “of the Lord,” after the words, “the Spirit,” occur. When David was giving his last command to Solomon his son, respecting the form and fashion after which the temple was to be

built, he informed him that the pattern was one which he had been taught by the Spirit,—which evidently means, that David had been instructed in the matter directly by God himself, through the Spirit. Nehemiah, in the ninth chapter and twentieth verse of his book, when addressing God in reference to the rebellion of the people of Israel, and recounting his acts of wondrous forbearance towards them, says : “Thou gavest also thy good Spirit to instruct them.” No one, without doing violence to the meaning of words, could suppose that this word denoted aught else than an agent. The Spirit is here called “good,” just as God himself is. To have applied the adjective “good” to an “influence” or a quality, would obviously be at variance with the whole tenor of the sublime address which Nehemiah here offers up to God. In the thirtieth verse of the same chapter, this seer and servant of God thus expresses himself : “Yet many years didst thou forbear them, and testified against them by thy Spirit in thy prophets.” The Spirit was as much an agent here as the prophets whom God chose as the medium through whom to re-monstrate with His rebellious people, and to

reproach them for their resistance to His authority. Nothing could be more evident than this, according to the ordinary import of language. The passage is in edifying accordance with the words of the apostle when he says, that holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. In Job there is a reference to the Spirit of God, which to my mind most strikingly indicates that that Spirit is an agent or being. "By his Spirit," says Job, "he," meaning God the Father, "garnished the heavens." By garnishing the heavens is to be understood the creation and adjustment, in their respective places, of the sun, the moon, and the stars, which are so beautiful to the eye to behold. To speak of an "influence," which is something impalpable, and without intelligence or power, thus calling into existence, and placing in their several spheres, the innumerable worlds which constitute the planetary system, would manifestly be to render uncertain all the acknowledged rules in accordance with which language is constructed.

The Psalmist, too, ascribes a creating power, in reference to material things, to the Spirit. Addressing God, in the hundred and fourth of his

holy and heavenly songs, he thus expresses himself in the thirtieth verse:—"Thou sendest forth thy Spirit; they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth." Here, in the same sentence, we have God himself as the Supreme Being identified with his holy Spirit. The latter is represented as creating, and He as renewing. I cannot conceive how any honest, intelligent mind could contemplate the close identity between God the Father and the Holy Spirit which is established in this passage, and yet doubt that the Spirit, as here spoken of, is an agent or being. To represent in the same breath, literally in the same sentence, an "influence" as doing that which God himself is described as performing, would surely be to trample on all our received ideas of the fitness of things. God cannot be thus associated with that which is not sentient, and which cannot, indeed, in any sense, be said to be an agent in the accomplishment of a particular work. It would be altogether at variance with our notions of the propriety of language, not to put the thing on higher and holier ground, thus to represent the Creator of all things, the mighty and majestic Maker of the universe, as a

fellow-worker with a mere "influence." And this view of the passage is strikingly borne out by the very verse which immediately follows. "The glory of the Lord," says David, "shall endure for ever: the Lord shall rejoice in his works." The glory of the Lord is here obviously spoken of in connection with the works which had been enumerated in the context of the passage; and an "influence," we all know, cannot be said to have glory. And so with regard to what is said of God rejoicing in his works,—that cannot be predicated of mere "influence," which is not susceptible either of joy or sorrow. It is susceptible of no emotion, because it has neither breath, nor being, nor consciousness of any kind; and, consequently, when the Spirit is in this passage represented as performing the same work as the Great Supreme himself, the Spirit must be regarded as an agent.

There are two more references to the Holy Spirit in the Book of Psalms, in both of which his personality is clearly set forth. "Whither," says David, in his beautiful prayer to God, as recorded in his hundred and thirty-ninth song, "whither shall I go from thy Spirit?" There

would have been no meaning in the words, had the term "Spirit" here denoted an "influence." The Psalmist clearly identifies God's Spirit with God himself. The words were manifestly, in his view, synonymous. This, indeed, is so plain that no unsophisticated mind could understand the passage in any other light. The very next sentence proves it in the most conclusive manner: "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?" or from Thyself? To my own mind the personality of the Holy Spirit is so demonstrably established by this passage, that were there no other to the same effect, I should feel bound to receive the doctrine with implicit faith in its truth. But the fact of the Spirit's being a person, is also clearly revealed in the tenth verse of the hundred and forty-third Psalm. "Teach me," says David, "to do thy will; for thou art my God: thy Spirit is good; lead me unto the land of uprightness." Here we see the same connection between God himself and His Spirit, as is so clearly discernible in the passage last quoted. "Thy Spirit is good: it is like Thyself; for Thou art good." Any comment on a passage like this would be but to

weaken its force. No plain, unsophisticated reader of God's Word, would come to any other conclusion than that the man according to God's own heart spoke of an agent or person when he said "Thy Spirit is good."

Passing over intervening passages, which seem to me very clearly to prove the fact of the Spirit's personality, let us fix our attention on the sixteenth verse of the forty-eighth chapter of Isaiah : "Come ye near unto me," said the prophet, addressing himself to the people of Israel, "hear ye this : I have not spoken to you in secret from the beginning ; from the time that it was, there am I : and now the Lord God, *and* his Spirit, hath sent me." Nothing could be more evident than this—that the Spirit is here spoken of as an agent, for the same thing is said of him as of God the Father, and the same act—that of sending the prophet—is ascribed to Him. To send a human being, implies both intelligence and power. An "influence" has neither ; and therefore the Spirit who, in conjunction with God, is thus represented as having sent Isaiah, must be a person.

CHAPTER II.

THE PERSONALITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, CONTINUED.

COMING down to the New Testament, we repeatedly find the use of the word "Spirit" employed under circumstances which would be altogether unmeaning, if the term were to be understood to denote an "influence" and not an agent. In the first verse of the fourth chapter of the Gospel by Matthew, Jesus is said to have been led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And in the first verse of the fourth chapter of the Gospel by Luke, referring to the same circumstance, the latter evangelist makes use of nearly the same language. "And Jesus," he says, "being full of the Holy Ghost, returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness." Here the words

“Holy Ghost,” as well as “Spirit,” are employed — a fact which presumptively favours the conclusion, that this evangelist knew he was speaking of an agent; for it is not probable that he would diversify his language, in the same sentence, had he been conscious that he was speaking only of an “influence,” or quality, or abstraction. That it was of the Spirit as a being, that Luke thus expressed himself, is a conviction which receives striking confirmation from what is stated in the previous chapter of his narrative, in which the fact of the Holy Ghost having visibly descended on Christ in a bodily shape, like a dove, on his baptism by John the Baptist, is recorded. The same fact is recorded by Matthew, Mark, and John. This, I regard as evidence which ought of itself to set at rest the question of the personality of the Spirit, even had we no other; for we never, in any part of the Word of God, read of an “influence” assuming a bodily shape, or any other form visible to the senses. We know that God himself repeatedly appeared to some of his chosen servants, in Old Testament times, in the form of an angel; and therefore when we read of the Spirit appearing in a shape like that of a dove,

the inference is inevitable, the conclusion certain—that the Spirit is a person or being, just as God the Father is.

But the occasion on which the Spirit descended in the shape of a dove on Jesus, is not the only occasion on which He appeared in a visible form. On the memorable Pentecostal day we read in the second, third, and fourth verses of the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles: “And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.”

Here the Spirit again assumed a visible shape. He became perceptible to the natural vision, which could not, with any regard to the received meaning of language, be predicated of any mere “influence.” An influence, as has just been remarked, cannot assume a visible form, nor do we ever read of its being put into a tangible shape by any external agency. And still further

to show that the Spirit is here spoken of as being an agent, not an influence, He is said to have filled the disciples with himself, and to empower them to speak with other tongues than their own.

In the narrative too, given by Luke, of the temptation of our Lord, and to which we have already referred, other incidental but most convincing evidence is furnished of the personality of the Spirit. The Spirit is represented as leading Jesus into the wilderness, and the devil is described as taking Him into a high mountain, and as bringing Him to Jerusalem, and setting Him on a pinnacle of the temple. The obvious deduction thereof is, that the Spirit is as much an agent as Satan himself.

In the eighth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles a very striking proof is furnished of the personality of the Holy Spirit. I refer to the circumstances which took place in the experience of Philip, in connection with his meeting with the eunuch of Ethiopia, who had come from his own far distant country to worship at Jerusalem. There we are told, in the twenty-sixth verse, that the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip.

And, in the twenty-ninth verse, this angel of the Lord is called the Spirit. And there is no fact more certain in the records of God's Holy Word, than this—that wherever the term angel is used it signifies a living being, and not an impalpable, unintelligent “influence.” It is worthy of observation that as the “angel of the Lord” spoke to Philip in the twenty-sixth verse, so the “Spirit” spoke to him in the twenty-ninth. Whether in either case he heard an audible voice addressing him as Saul of Tarsus did, when he was converted, we are not informed. But as if to place beyond all question the personality of the Spirit in this passage, we read in the thirty-ninth verse, that “the Spirit of the Lord” caught away Philip out of the sight of the eunuch. Here then is a distinct act of great power ascribed to the Spirit—an act which no mere “influence” could perform—an act which could only be performed by an agent possessing more than human might.

Another instance in which the Spirit is represented as speaking to the saints of God, is given in the nineteenth verse and tenth chapter of the Acts. “While Peter,” we are told, “thought on

the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee." The memorable vision which is here referred to, is well known to every reader of his Bible. Some persons may suppose, and say, that the Spirit in this passage simply means something which Peter saw in a dream. That view of the passage would not accord with the distinction which is made between the vision and the Spirit which spoke to Peter. It was not, it will be observed, while Peter was in the vision that the Spirit spoke to him. It was after the vision had passed, and he was cool and collected, in his waking moments. He had been doubting what the vision meant, and while at a loss to comprehend its object and import, the three men who were sent by Cornelius, having ascertained where Simon's house was, stood before the gates. Then it was, and while meditating on the vision, that the Spirit spoke and said unto Peter: "Behold, three men seek thee. Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them." The latter four words are remarkably conclusive, as proving the personality of the Holy Spirit. An "influence" could neither speak nor send. An "influence" could not say

“I.” None but a person or agent could thus speak and act. I cannot conceive the possibility of any sincere seeker of the truth, in reference to the teaching of the Scriptures regarding the nature of the Holy Ghost, reading this passage, and yet denying or doubting the personality of the Spirit.

Let us come now to the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. To one or two passages in that chapter reference has already been made. Proofs of the personality of the Holy Spirit are so numerous and conclusive in that portion of the inspired volume, that even were all the rest silent on the subject, we should have ample ground, from its statements alone, on which to rest our faith in the important truth which I am endeavouring to establish in the minds and hearts of all those in whose hands Providence may be pleased to place this volume. In the very first verse there is a reference to the Holy Spirit, which clearly implies His personality. “There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” The passage would be unmeaning, were the “flesh” to be placed antithe-

tically to a mere "influence." In the fourth verse we have a repetition of the words, "who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." The import of this and of the first verse may be confidently inferred, from what follows in the fifth verse: "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit." The "flesh" and the "Spirit" are here said to have "things," which could not be predicated of a mere "influence." This view of the personality of the Holy Ghost is further confirmed in the ninth verse: "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." It will be here observed that believers are said to be in the Spirit, which in the next clause of the verse is represented as the "Spirit of God," and in the clauses succeeding, as the "Spirit of Christ." The Christians at Rome could never have been spoken of as having had the "Spirit of God" and the "Spirit of Christ" dwelling in them, if all that the apostle meant was to convey, that they were under the influence of an "influence;"

for that would really be the construction which ought to be put on his words, were the non-personality of the Holy Spirit the theory which ought to be received. The next verse, namely, the tenth, is in evident accordance with this view ; for Christ is there said to be in the Roman believers,—which shows that the personality of the Spirit is as much a fact as that of Christ Jesus himself. In the eleventh verse the same truth is still more amply confirmed. “But,” it is added, “if the spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his spirit that dwelleth in you.” Here we are distinctly told that it was the Spirit of God that raised up Jesus from the dead. And as if with the view of identifying the Spirit with God himself, and proving the personality of the former, it is said, “He that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies.” And that this is done through the agency of the Holy Ghost, is very clearly shown in the latter part of the verse where the expression occurs, “By his Spirit that dwelleth in you.” Could anything be more antagonistic to the con-

clusions of reason, to say nothing of Scripture, than the supposition that any "influence" which may now abide in the minds and hearts of Christians, should on the morning of the resurrection, quicken the bodies that had lain for thousands of years in their graves, and raise them up from their graves in the enjoyment of a fresh and vigorous life? The hypothesis will not bear a moment's consideration.

Proceeding onwards to the thirteenth verse, we read: "If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." This work of mortifying "the deeds of the body," is one which can only be accomplished by an agent possessing superior power; for we are everywhere told in the holy oracles, that nothing short of Almighty energy can enable a man to triumph over the corruptions of his own nature. It would be altogether out of the question, to suppose that a work so great could be performed by a mere "influence" alone. It is a work requiring a far greater display of power than the creation of a universe would do. Inanimate nature offers no resistance to the will of his Maker; but the human heart does. Nothing less than

the Almighty power of God can conquer or subdue the rebellious spirit of man. But of this more hereafter.

Then in the sixteenth verse, as has been shown in a previous part of this volume, the Spirit is spoken of as witnessing with the spirits of believers, to the fact of their being the children of God. An "influence" cannot, as already remarked, be called a witness. We associate with the term the idea of an agent or intelligent being.

In the twenty-third verse, the believers at Rome were told that they had in them the "first fruits of the Spirit,"—fruits evidently produced not by an "influence," but by an agent. But if there could be a doubt as to whether or not the word "Spirit," which so frequently occurs in this chapter, ought to be regarded as a person or an "influence," I regard it as impossible that any honest mind capable of perceiving the natural tendencies of evidence, could have any doubts on the subject, after what is said of the Spirit in the twenty-sixth and twenty-seventh verses. In these verses it is said that the "Spirit helpeth our infirmities,"—that "He maketh intercession for us," and that "He that searcheth the hearts,

knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit." The latter phrase seems to me to be so conclusive as to the personality of the Holy Ghost, that were all other parts of the Scriptures silent on the subject, that one verse would impose on me a moral obligation to receive the doctrine. If the Spirit has a mind, the Spirit must be a conscious and intelligent agent. The term would be an outrage on all our notions of meaning of language, as applied to an "influence."

But not to dwell longer on the proofs of the Holy Spirit's personality, furnished so largely in this chapter, let us now glance at some other evidence which is to be found in favour of the same truth, as furnished by the obvious import of the word "Spirit." In the same epistle, in the fifteenth chapter and the thirtieth verse, the name of the Spirit occurs in connection with that of Jesus Christ, in a way which establishes the doctrine of the Spirit's personality. "Now I beseech you, brethren," says Paul, "for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers for me." Here the Spirit is not only associated with Christ the Son, but after the words "for

Christ's sake," there occurs the phrase, "and for the love of the Spirit." It matters not whether by the love of the Spirit is understood the love of believers to the Spirit, or the love of the Spirit to believers,—though I believe the last to be the meaning—or whether the phrase be understood in both senses—it is as conclusive a proof of the personality of the Holy Ghost as could be desired. An "influence" is not susceptible of feelings of affection, or, indeed, of feelings of any kind; and therefore, an "influence" could not love us. Neither, on the other hand, can we love an "influence." And if an "influence" cannot love or be loved, it follows of necessity, that the Spirit here spoken of must be a person, an agent, a sentient being.

Very conclusive, too, as to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit's personality, is that passage in the fourth verse of the second chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, where the apostle Paul says: "And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." Here the apostle clearly ascribes the success which attended his preaching as a minister of the Gospel

to an agent, whose province it was to demonstrate to the mind the truth of his doctrines, and to bring it home to the heart and conscience with resistless effect. The Spirit first made the truths, simply as truths, demonstrably clear to the judgment, and then brought them to bear on the heart with a power which could not be withstood. As if to render it impossible that any one should fail to discern the great truth—that the saving enlightenment of the understanding, the conviction of the judgment, and the renewal of the heart, are severally brought about by the operation of the Spirit as an agent, the apostle adds in the verse which follows—“That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the *power* of God:” that is, that those who had thus been enlightened, convinced, and converted, should be upheld in the divine life, through faith, by the power of God unceasingly put forth. There would be no point, or propriety in this passage, were we to regard the Spirit as here spoken of, in the light of a mere impalpable “influence.”

In the tenth verse of the same chapter, there is a striking additional proof of the same truth. Speaking in rapturous language of those tran-

scendent glories of the heavenly state, which cannot be discerned by the natural senses, the apostle adds—“But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.” The Spirit, it will be observed, is here spoken of in contradistinction to the eye, and ear, and heart of man, which last phrase means the man as a spiritual being; and therefore, there would be no grammatical propriety of language in the passage, were the Spirit so spoken of only an “influence.” But still more forcibly is the personality of the Holy Ghost inculcated in the next clause of the verse, where it is said, “For the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.” To search necessarily involves the fact of a searcher. And that term no less necessarily implies an agent; for a mere “influence” cannot intelligently and profoundly go through an examination or inquiry. Much less could it search “*all* things, yea, the deep things of God.” God’s own Holy Spirit alone is capable of doing this.

A further illustration and proof of the personality of the Holy Ghost is furnished in the

verse which follows: "For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." Here we have a kind of parallel between the Spirit of God and the spirit of man, so far as relates to man's knowledge of earthly things. It is the spirit, or soul, or mind of man, that knoweth those things which concern his earthly existence. No man would so far do violence to the obvious meaning of language, as to regard the word "spirit," here applied to man, as being synonymous with "influence;" neither can the words "Spirit of God" be understood as a convertible phrase with "influence," without trampling under foot all the recognised rules by which the meaning of language is ascertained.

The twelfth chapter of the same book is full of proofs of the personality of the Holy Ghost. In the third verse the apostle says: "Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." If this verse stood alone, and there were no further reference to the Holy

Spirit which would show that he is an agent, the two cases of speaking alluded to here ought to remove all doubt on the point. But the same fact is yet more clearly set forth in each of the eight verses which follow :—"Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom ; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit ; to another faith by the same Spirit ; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit ; to another the working of miracles ; to another prophecy ; to another discerning of spirits ; to another divers kinds of tongues ; to another the interpretation of tongues : but all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will."

It will be observed, that in the fourth and fifth verses the Spirit and the Lord are spoken of in precisely the same terms : "The same Spirit" and "the same Lord." Can any one really believe that the Spirit spoken of in this passage is an

“influence?” Would there not be something altogether incongruous in the association of an “influence” with a person? God’s Holy Word furnishes no instance of such incongruities. But as if it were not sufficient to show that the expression, the “same Lord,” preceding the words in reference to the Holy Ghost, “the same Spirit,” implies the personality of the Spirit, we are told in the sixth verse that “there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God who worketh all in all.” “The same God;” so that here we have the same expression applied alike to the Spirit, to the Son, and to God the Father. By all the received rules of interpretation it follows, that if the Father and the Son are agents or persons, so must the Spirit be. It appears to me that it would not be easy to imagine a more perfect proof of the doctrine of the Trinity, than is furnished in this passage, and it seems strange that in dealing with those who deny the doctrine of the Trinity, there should not be more frequent references made to it, and greater stress laid upon it.

In the eighth verse the word “Spirit” occurs twice, and in one of the two instances the phrase,

“the same Spirit,” is repeated, which appears to me to be an amplification of the evidence of the personality of the Holy Ghost given in a previous verse. In the ninth verse we have the phrase “the same Spirit” repeated twice, furnishing a yet further amplification of the evidence of the same fact; but in the second of the two instances, in which, in the ninth verse, the words “the same Spirit” occur, a striking collateral proof of the Spirit’s personality is presented to us. The “gifts of healing” are ascribed to the Spirit, and in the verse which follows, the prerogative of conferring the power to work miracles, is attributed to the Holy Spirit; so that the Holy Spirit is, in these respects also, placed on a footing with the Father and the Son in other portions of Scripture. I must not refrain from here emphatically saying that I cannot conceive how any reasonable and honest inquirer after truth could carefully peruse the passages we have quoted from this chapter, and yet fail to come to the conclusion that the Holy Spirit is an agent, not an “influence.” But, as if to preclude the possibility of supposing that the Spirit here spoken of is an “influence,” the personal pronoun “*he*” is distinctly applied

to Him in the eleventh verse. "But all these," says the apostle, "worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as *he* will." To the class of evidence respecting the personality of the Spirit, which is to be derived from the frequency and emphasis with which the Scriptures speak of the Holy Ghost in language of a similar kind, namely, as "he" and "him," I shall have occasion particularly to advert hereafter, and therefore only make an incidental allusion to the use of the personal pronoun "he" in the passage in question.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth verses of the third chapter of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, the personality of the Holy Spirit is placed in a light so clear, that it might be supposed no one could fail to perceive it. In preceding parts of the chapter, acts had been ascribed to the Spirit which could only be attributed to an agent; such as writing on the fleshy tables of the heart. And here we are told that the Lord himself is the Spirit referred to. "Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into

the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." It will be observed that not only does the expression "the Spirit of the Lord" occur twice in this passage, but that the Lord is said to be that "Spirit." As manifestly, therefore, as the Lord is a person, so is the Spirit. This is so self-evident, that no observations of mine could make it more so.

In the eighteenth verse of the second chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, not only is the order in which God is to be worshipped by believers clearly set forth, but the personality of the Spirit is also indicated. "For through him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father." The personal pronoun "him," as here used, refers to the Lord Jesus Christ; and the way in which the worshippers of the Father are to approach Him, is through Jesus Christ and by the Spirit. Here the doctrine of the Trinity, as well as the personality of the Holy Ghost, is clearly established.

In the third, fourth, fifth, and sixth verses of the fourth chapter of the same epistle, we have another explicit exhibition of the great truth, that there is a glorious Trinity of persons in the Godhead, as well as of the individual doctrine,

that the Spirit is an agent. "Endeavouring," says the apostle, "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." A unity of end and aim is here ascribed to the Spirit, which implies intelligence, — which cannot with propriety be predicated of an "influence." But that is not all. The language which follows is singular in the precision with which it points out the fact of a triune God as well as the personality of the Holy Ghost. There is, we are told, "one Spirit," "one Lord," and "one God and Father of all."

Passing over other references to the Holy Ghost, which are made in this epistle, and which would be unmeaning on the assumption that the Spirit is only an "influence," I will content myself with a brief allusion to that which occurs in the seventeenth and eighteenth verses of the sixth chapter. "And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: praying always with all prayer and supplication in

the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." By the expression "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God," I think is clearly meant that the word of God is the instrumentality through which the Holy Spirit accomplishes his purposes, whether in the conversion of sinners, or in the edification, the sanctification, and the comfort of the saints. The use of a sword necessarily involves the existence of an intelligent being, as well as a hand to direct it. To suppose that an "influence" could use a sword, would be at variance with all our received views of the fitness of language.

There is one proof of the personality of the Holy Ghost, given in the fourteenth verse of the ninth chapter of the Hebrews, which, though very brief, will be found, if duly considered in all its bearings, to be very conclusive. "How much more," says the writer of that beautiful epistle, "shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God." The adjective "eternal," it must at once strike the mind of the reader, could not, with any propriety, be applied to an "influence."

An influence cannot, in the nature of things, be said to be eternal. It is an effect flowing from some pre-existing cause. If, therefore, the Spirit be eternal, the Spirit cannot be an influence, but must of necessity be an agent.

Let me mention, as another collateral proof of the personality of the Holy Spirit, that He is everywhere spoken of as speaking by the Gospel message to those to whom that message is sent. "The Spirit," we are told, "speaketh in this wise." "Hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth. Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them." "And the Spirit and the bride say come." No candid mind, seeking humbly and earnestly to know the truth, on the important subject of the Spirit's personality, can, I am sure, prayerfully study these expressions, and yet doubt the fact of the Holy Ghost being an agent.

Let us now glance at a few of those passages in which the Holy Ghost is spoken of as "the Spirit of God." Job, in the fourth verse of the

thirty-third chapter of his book, makes use of the expression "The Spirit of God hath made me." It is incompatible with all our ideas of a mere "influence," that it should be the maker of man, the creator of both soul and body ; for both are included in the words "hath made me." That is so obviously the sole work of an intelligent agent, that no one could come to an opposite conclusion.

Under the phrase "Spirit of God," there is what appears to me an unanswerable argument in favour of the personality of the Holy Ghost, in the twenty-eighth verse of the twelfth chapter of Matthew. "If," says Jesus, "I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you." He had been inwardly regarded by the Jews as casting out devils by Beelzebub, as stated in the previous verse, and in that which preceded it He speaks of being represented as casting out Satan by Satan. Christ's answer to the charge was, that He had cast out devils only by the Spirit of God. From this the plain inference is, that inasmuch as the "Spirit of God" is spoken of as the means by which Christ did cast out devils, in contradistinction to the agency of Satan, that "Spirit of God" must mean an

agent. To put a mere "influence" in opposition to "Satan," or "Beelzebub," who is distinctly called a person in the passage where Jesus speaks of him as "himself," and of his kingdom as "his" kingdom, would be at direct variance with the modes of expression which are common in the world.

In the Epistle to the Romans, to which, under the word "Spirit," we have already at some length adverted, we find some further striking proofs of the same truth furnished by the way in which the phrase, "Spirit of God," is obviously to be understood. Let us allude to only two such proofs. In the fourteenth verse of the eighth chapter the apostle speaks of believers as being led by the "Spirit of God." An "influence" can hardly be called a leader. The word is only applicable, in strict propriety of speech, to a living being. Referring to the fifteenth chapter, we find Paul saying, in the nineteenth verse, in reference to the wondrous works which God had wrought by him; "Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ." Here the

apostle clearly attributes the miraculous success of his ministerial labours, not to the signs and wonders which had accompanied his proclamation of the Gospel message, but expressly and directly to "the power of the Spirit of God." There is something especially important, for our purpose, in the latter phrase. The works which had been done were performed by the "*power*" of the Spirit of God. Those who hold that the Holy Ghost is only an "influence," regard the term as synonymous with "power" or "quality." In that case the apostle's words would admit of this construction,—that the mighty works referred to as having been done by him, had been accomplished by the influence of an "influence." That would surely be to make the passage altogether unintelligible, not to use the harsher word absurd. But, if we receive the passage in its natural sense, namely, that the mighty signs and wonders were performed by the putting forth of the power, or the exercise of the influence of the Spirit of God, we discern a remarkable propriety and beauty in the expression.

Very forcibly, too, is the personality of the Holy Ghost set forth in the third verse of the

third chapter of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians. "Forasmuch," says the apostle, "as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart." A living, intelligent being writes with ink, but the writing here spoken of, which is not in stone, but in the fleshy tables of the human heart, is written with, or "by the Spirit of the living God." It were impossible, I should imagine, for any unsophisticated mind, possessing ordinary intelligence, to fail to perceive in the phrase "Spirit of the living God," as here employed, the distinct personality of the "Holy Ghost."

One more reference to a passage in which the phrase "Spirit of God" occurs, will suffice. It is the well-known passage in the fourth chapter and thirtieth verse of the Ephesians: "And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." An "influence," it is obvious to all, is neither susceptible of sorrow nor of joy. It has no sensation of any kind; but here the "Holy Spirit of God" is represented as being grieved by the resistance which He often

has to encounter in the hearts of even the best believers ; and, consequently, the Spirit must be a person, or intelligent being. This is one of many similar passages in the Word of God, which so demonstrably proves the personality of the Holy Spirit, that any Christian may take his stand on them as on an immovable rock, when assailed by the sophistries of those who would seek to exclude from the Bible, and from the universe of God, the blessed doctrine that the Holy Ghost is an agent.

CHAPTER III.

THE PERSONALITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT,
CONCLUDED.

LET us now shortly advert to a few of those passages of Scripture in which the Spirit is spoken of as the "Holy" Spirit, and it will be seen that these, no less than the others, prove the personality of the Spirit. In the eleventh verse of the fifty-first Psalm, David prays that God would not take his Holy Spirit from him. The Psalmist, it is very plain, could not have understood the Holy Spirit to mean an "influence;" for the preceding prayer, "Cast me not away from thy presence," shows that, at that particular moment, he had particularly vivid views of God in his personal character, and was not, therefore, likely in the very next breath to ask that an "influence" might not be taken from him.

Isaiah, in the sixty-third chapter of his book, and the tenth verse, speaks of the Jews of his day as having vexed the Holy Spirit. "They rebelled," he says, "and vexed his Holy Spirit." An "influence" is not susceptible of vexation any more than of grief. The terms, indeed, are nearly synonymous; and it adds to the force of the proof of the personality of the Holy Ghost, which is furnished in the passage quoted from the Ephesians, relative to grieving the Spirit of God, that one so similar in its import should be found in the Old Testament.

In the thirteenth verse of the first chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, the apostle tells the members of the church at Ephesus, that they were "sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise." The Holy Spirit of promise clearly means the Holy Spirit promised in the previous dispensation, when God himself said that he would pour out His Holy Spirit on all flesh. It is not in the power of an "influence" to seal believers. To do that, requires an agent. The same word seal, as applied to believers, through the agency of the Holy Ghost, occurs, as will be remembered, in the passage already quoted from this same

Epistle: "Grieve not the Spirit, whereby ye are sealed," or made safe, "until the day of redemption."

In the fourth chapter and eighth verse of the First Epistle to the Thessalonians, the personality of the Holy Ghost is brought forth with considerable clearness, if not in so very marked a manner as in some of the other passages which have been quoted. "He," says the apostle, "that despiseth," namely, the Gospel message and the revelation which God had made of himself, "despiseth not man but God, who hath also given unto us His Holy Spirit." There is so evident a connection here between God himself and His Holy Spirit, that it would seem to do violence to the meaning of the passage to interpret it in any other way than as indicating the personality of the Holy Spirit. To suppose an "influence" to be here meant by the phrase "Holy Spirit," would obviously be to take a low and unworthy view of the word.

But the Holy Spirit is also frequently spoken of in the Scriptures by the phrase "Holy Ghost;" and, under the latter expression, is in the great majority of cases no less clearly shown to mean an agent, than under the words "Spirit," "Spirit

of God," and "Holy Spirit." There is one passage in the thirty-first and thirty-second verses of the twelfth chapter of Matthew, in which, under the term "Holy Ghost," the personality of the Spirit is proved with a conclusiveness which no one, it might be supposed, should be able to resist. "Wherefore I say unto you, all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men : but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him : but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come." First of all, it will be observed that the sin of blasphemy is here said to be committed against the Holy Ghost. Now, it would surely deprive language of its natural meaning to say that any one could blaspheme or sin against an "influence." But that is not the only argument for the personality of the Holy Spirit which is derived from this passage. It is afterwards clearly set forth that the sin against the Holy Ghost is an act of guilt of surpassing heinousness. It is even guilt of a deeper die than to sin against Christ himself;

for we are told that he that speaketh against the Son of man may be forgiven, but that there will be no forgiveness, either in this world, or in that which is to come, to those who sin against the Holy Ghost. Here the Lord Jesus and the Holy Ghost are associated together ; and to speak against the latter is represented as a sin of a much more aggravated nature than to speak against the former. As we have said of other proofs of the Spirit's personality, we could not conceive of any proof more conclusive than this.

We pass over, for the present, the unanswerable argument in proof of the personality of the Spirit which is given in Christ's commission to his apostles, when he charged them to baptize all nations in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, because that argument will come with greater propriety under consideration in an after-part of the chapter.

Many intervening references to the Holy Ghost, clearly showing the personality of the Spirit, occur in other parts of the evangelical narrative by Matthew, and also in the narratives of Mark, Luke, and John. To some of these we shall have occasion to make brief allusions hereafter. In

the meantime, passing them over, let us come to the Acts of the Apostles, in which there are a number of arguments for the Spirit's personality, which no one can meet and answer. In the very first chapter and second verse, there is one whose force must be felt by every candid inquirer into the subject. Speaking of Jesus, the words occur—“Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he, through the Holy Ghost, had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen.” So that Jesus Christ himself was as much taught by the Holy Spirit, and spoke as much by the Spirit, as were his apostles and disciples. What a poor, meagre, unmeaning construction of this passage it would be to understand it as indicating that Jesus, when giving commandments to the apostles, had spoken not through the Spirit as an agent, but through or by an impalpable, unconscious “influence.”

In the fifth chapter of the same book we have three proofs of the strongest kind of the Spirit's personality. The first occurs in the third verse, where Satan is described as having induced Ananias to lie unto the Holy Ghost. Surely, if words could convey an idea of personality, these words

would. No one can lie unto an "influence." It must be to a living, intelligent being. The second proof is contained in the ninth verse, where Peter reproached the wife of Ananias for having agreed with her husband to "tempt 'he Spirit of the Lord.'" That could not mean an "influence," because an "influence" cannot be tempted. An agent or person only can be so. The remaining proof is no less decisive. It will be found in the thirty-second verse. Speaking of the resurrection and ascension into heaven of the Saviour, the Apostle Paul says: "And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.'" Observe the association between the apostles and the Holy Spirit. They were witnesses of "these things," and so was also the Holy Ghost. The personality of the latter is explained as that of the former. To connect the apostles and an "influence" as conjoint and concurrent witnesses to certain great facts in our Lord's history would, without controversy, be at utter variance with the fitness of things.

Omitting many passages in the chapters which intervene, which point more or less conclusively to

the personality of the Holy Spirit, let us glance at one verse in the ninth chapter, in which a striking proof is given of that doctrine. The verse alluded to is the thirty-first. "Then," we are told, "had the churches rest throughout all Judæa and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied." Here the early churches are represented first as walking in the fear of the Lord, and then in the comfort of the Holy Ghost. As confidently, therefore, as we would, from this passage, conclude that the Lord is a person, would we conclude that the Holy Ghost is a person also.

Nor can any one with the shadow of reason doubt the personality of the Spirit, who meditates on the twenty-eighth verse of the fifteenth chapter of the same Acts of the Apostles, in which the Apostle James, in addressing the "men and brethren" who were then assembled at Jerusalem, says: "For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things." Here again, as in so many other portions of the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit is conjoined in such a manner with

persons, that it would be to disregard all the universally received rules for arriving at the signification of words, were we to come to the conclusion that a mere "influence" is alluded to by the term "Holy Ghost." It "seemed good," or right, "to the Holy Ghost," an expression which most manifestly sets forth that the "Holy Ghost" is an intelligent agent, capable of discerning between what is good and what is evil,—between what is right and what is wrong.

In the twentieth chapter of the same book there are two proofs of the same truth, which must be felt to be possessed of great weight, by every upright enquirer into the teaching of Scripture on the point. In the twenty-third verse the Holy Ghost is spoken of, as he is in so many other parts of the New Testament, as a witness, a word which, as before remarked, involves the fact of personality; but in addition to the word "witnessing," as applied to the Spirit, the apostle represents the Spirit as speaking and as saying, that in every city bonds and afflictions were to be his portion. But were it possible that in some minds there might still linger an idea that this might be predicated of an "influence," Paul, in

his parting address to the elders of the church at Ephesus, gives them, in the twenty-eighth verse, this counsel: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." The elders thus addressed had been chosen or appointed to their office by the Holy Ghost. Who could for a moment imagine that "Holy Ghost" here meant an "influence?" Who could suppose it meant anything but an agent?

It were easy to quote many more passages from the same Acts of the Apostles, proving that the Holy Ghost is a person; but that would be to accumulate too great a number of proofs from one portion of the New Testament. Let us, therefore, omit these, and adduce one or two more proofs of the Spirit's personality, from subsequent books. In the First Epistle to the Thessalonians, the first chapter and fifth verse, the Apostle says:—"For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance: as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake." Here,

it will be remarked, that the Gospel is said to have come to the church at Thessalonica in the Holy Ghost, as well as in power,—an expression which conclusively shows that the Holy Ghost is not the “influence” or “power” which those who reject the idea of the Spirit’s personality say the words mean. The Gospel comes with power *and* in the Holy Ghost. And this view is further borne out by what follows in the next verse, where it is said that the Word had been received in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost,—with joy caused by the consciousness that they had communion with a friend, in the person of the Holy Ghost, who dwelt in their minds and hearts.

Let us glance at one passage, in the Second Epistle of Paul to Timothy, in which there is a clear unfolding of the Spirit’s personality. The passage is in the fourteenth verse of the first chapter. Writing to his son Timothy, Paul says: “That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us.” What could be more incongruous than to exhort Timothy to keep the good “thing” referred to by means of an “influence?” An “influence” cannot keep itself. It can only be preserved by

some external agency,—just as it must have been caused by some such agency. And thus it will be observed, that the Holy Ghost is said to “dwell” in Timothy. That obviously can only with propriety be predicated of a being. An “influence” cannot be said to “dwell” or inhabit; but this is a point to which we shall afterwards have occasion to make a more particular reference; and, therefore, it is not necessary to advert to it further in this part of the chapter.’

I will only allude to one more of the class of proofs of the Spirit’s personality, now under consideration. The passage alluded to will be found in the fourth verse of the second chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews:—“God also,” says the inspired writer, “bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will.” It is not assuredly the province of an “influence,” a thing which is impalpable and unconscious, to bestow gifts. That can be the province of a being alone. To say that “it” gave gifts, would be an anachronism. If a gift is bestowed, we naturally and necessarily infer that the giver is a person.

Let us now come to the consideration of a class of proofs, of the personality of the Holy Spirit of a kind different from those to which we have already invited attention ; and which, though not perhaps so direct, are, nevertheless, inferentially conclusive. We allude to that order of proofs of this important point, which are furnished in those passages of Scripture in which the same things are said of God or of Christ, or of both the Father and the Son, as of the Holy Spirit ; and surely it can need no elaborate or lengthened argument to satisfy any intelligent mind, that if the same things are said of the Spirit as of God, or of Christ, or of both God and Christ, the Holy Ghost must be no less a person than they. First of all, then, God is described as the creator of the world and of man. So is Jesus Christ. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him ; and without him was not anything made that was made." No less explicitly is creation ascribed to the Holy Spirit. "By his Spirit," saith Job, "he hath garnished the heavens." And again, "The Spirit of God hath made me." David,

too, in the thirtieth verse of his hundred and fourth Psalm, says : "Thou sendest forth thy Spirit, they are created." The plain inference from these three portions of Holy Writ is, that the Spirit is as much a person as the Father or the Son, inasmuch as creation is as distinctly ascribed to the latter as to the two former. To put an "influence" in such a case, on a footing of equality with God and Christ, would manifestly be unnatural and illogical.

With regard also to the working of miracles, God, we all know, is specially represented in the Scriptures, as the Being by whom miracles are wrought. Jesus too, in the days of His flesh, was remarkable for the number of miracles which He wrought. It is no less emphatically declared of the Holy Spirit, that He not only worketh miracles himself, but that He imparts that power, or rather did impart that power in the early ages of the church, to the preachers of the Gospel. See an illustration of this, what is said by Paul in the twelfth chapter of his Second Epistle to the Corinthians.

Regeneration is another act which is ascribed to God in various parts of His Word. "Which,"

says the Apostle John, in the first chapter of his Gospel and the thirteenth verse, "which were born not of blood nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." "Whosoever is born of God," it is elsewhere said, "doth not commit sin." And "whosoever is born of God, overcometh the world." In these, and in various similar passages which might be quoted, the process of spiritual regeneration is distinctly attributed to the Father. Not less explicitly is the new birth ascribed to the Holy Ghost. See for proof of this, the third chapter of the Gospel of John, where we are told that, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. By the word "water," as here employed, it is as plain as anything can be, that all that is meant is simply that water in baptism was the presumed sign of a new birth by the Spirit. In the very next verse, indeed, the spiritual birth is explicitly ascribed to the operation of the Holy Ghost alone. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." And then again, in the eighth verse of the same chapter, after speaking of the invisible agency of the Word, the evan-

gelist adds, "So is every one that is born of the Spirit." The work of regeneration in the new birth is also set forth under the term "quick-eneth," and this word is equally applied to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. "And you," says Paul, speaking of God in his Epistle to the Ephesians, "hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and in sins." And again in the same second chapter and fourth and fifth verses, it is said: "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ,—by grace ye are saved." In the fifth chapter of the Gospel by John, and at the twenty-first verse, Christ is represented as quickening those who were dead in trespasses and in sins: "Even so the Son quickeneth whom he will." In the forty-fifth verse of the fifteenth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, Christ is set before us as quickening those who were spiritually dead: "The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit." Then, with regard to the Holy Ghost, as a quickener from spiritual death, we are told in the sixty-third verse of the sixth

chapter of the Gospel by John, "It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing." And Paul, in the sixth verse of the third chapter of his Second Epistle to the Corinthians, says: "The letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life." Peter also, in his First Epistle, in the third chapter and at the eighteenth verse, speaks of believers as having "been put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit." So that here we have each of the three Persons in the Trinity represented as doing the same work of regenerating or quickening dead souls,—which is clear evidence that the Spirit is in the same sense an agent as the Father and the Son.

God, and Christ, and the Holy Spirit are severally spoken of in the Scriptures as sustaining the character of teachers of the saints. Everywhere, in the Old Testament, the Father is represented as the teacher of his people, and, in the New Testament, there is no character in which the Son appears with greater frequency and prominence than in that of the instructor of his followers. Hence He is called pre-eminently "the Great Teacher." Indeed, the very word Master, under which His disciples in the days of His

earthly sojourn often spoke of him, is synonymous with teacher as well as with Lord. It implied that He was their prophet as well as their king,—one to whose guidance as well as government they had committed themselves. When, therefore, the Holy Ghost is spoken of in the character of a teacher, we naturally and correctly conclude that He is no less a person than the Father and the Son. The instances in which the Spirit is spoken of as a teacher are too numerous to be all alluded to. A reference to a few such instances will suffice. And first of all, there is the remarkable illustration, or rather series of illustrations of this which we meet with in the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth chapters of the Gospel by John. In those portions descriptive of the closing scenes of the Saviour's life, Jesus represents the Holy Spirit as his successor in various respects. He is so represented in regard to the comfort which the Spirit would habitually minister to believers. And He is no less emphatically described as Christ's successor, in regard to the illumination and edification of His people. "But the Comforter," says our adorable Lord, "which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my

name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you." And again: "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: and he also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning." Once more: "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come." In the thirteenth verse of the second chapter of Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians the Holy Spirit is emphatically set forth as the great instructor or teacher of believers: "Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual." I have confined my quotations on this point to the New Testament. I might have given many no less clear and conclusive from the Old. There is one very striking one in the twentieth verse of the ninth chapter of the book of Nehemiah. In the course of the

beautiful and sublime prayer recorded in that chapter as having been publicly offered up to God, there occur the words : "Thou gavest also thy good Spirit to instruct them." The Psalms of David, too, in many places distinctly taught the same truth regarding the Holy Spirit, in his office of teacher of God's people. If, then, we repeat, the Father and the Son are so often spoken of as teachers of believers, and the same office is ascribed to the Holy Ghost, we are justified in concluding that the Spirit is no less a person or agent than the Father and the Son.

God, and Christ, and the Holy Spirit are respectively represented in the Scriptures as the comforters of believers. "God," says Paul, "who comforteth us in all our tribulations, that we may be able to comfort others with the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God." Elsewhere the Father is spoken of as the "God of all comfort." He is the "God that comforteth those that are cast down." He is everywhere represented as the source of comfort. Jesus was remarkable for the comfort which he ministered to the miserable when He sojourned on earth. The evangelistic narratives abound

with illustrations of this. It was indeed a character in which He especially delighted to regard Himself. Hence, when His work was well nigh done, and He was giving what may be called His dying address to His disciples, He engaged to send them another Comforter to take His own place, and permanently abide with them. That other Comforter was the Holy Ghost; so that the Holy Ghost is now, in a sense, as much the Comforter of all believers as Christ himself was when He tabernacled in this world. The only difference is, that Christ while on earth was visible to His disciples by the eye of sense, whereas the Holy Spirit is only discernible by the eye of faith. Need it then be repeated, that if the Holy Spirit is spoken of as the Comforter of the people of God in the same sense as the Father and the Son are, the Spirit is also, like them, a being or an agent.

Then, again, the personality of the Spirit may be inferred from the frequency and explicitness with which He, in common with the Father and the Son, is said to dwell in the hearts of believers, and they in Him, as well as in God and Christ. Both divisions of the Scriptures are full to over-

flowing of statements relative to God dwelling with and in His people. They are so numerous and so plain that every reader of the Bible will at once, without my aid, call many such to his remembrance. God himself graciously condescends to assure us, from His own lips, of the fact of His dwelling with and in His people. In the fifteenth verse of the fifty-seventh chapter of Isaiah, God himself says: "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and Holy place, with Him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." Paul, in the sixteenth verse of the sixth chapter of his Second Epistle to the Corinthians, refers to this and other similar observations from God's own lips, when he says: "And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." Of the many instances in which Christ is said to dwell in the hearts of believers, let one suffice: "That Christ," says Paul, in the seventeenth verse of the third chap-

ter of his Epistle to the Ephesians, "that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith, that ye being rooted and grounded in love may be able," it is added in the eighteenth and nineteenth verses, "to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God." With regard to the Holy Spirit dwelling in believers, the passages of Scripture in the New Testament are even more numerous than they are in reference to the Father and the Son. In the sixteenth and seventeenth verses of the fourteenth chapter of the Gospel of John, Christ, when giving his farewell address to his disciples before his crucifixion, says: "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him: for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." Again: "But ye are not," says Paul, in the eighth chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, at the ninth verse, "But ye are not in the flesh, but in

the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." And in the eleventh verse of the same chapter, he further says: "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you." The same Apostle, in the third chapter of his First Epistle to the Corinthians, and at the seventeenth verse, says: "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy: for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." In his Second Epistle to Timothy, in the first chapter and fourteenth verse, Paul exhorts his "son in the faith of the Gospel," to keep that good thing which was committed unto him by the "Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us."

We pass over the various passages of the divine records in which the same idea is brought out by representing the minds and hearts of believers as alike the temples and habitations of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, in order that we may remark, that as God and Christ and the Holy Spirit are severally said to dwell in the

hearts of the saints, so the latter are said to be in, or to dwell with, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Of the union of believers to God and to Christ, or of their dwelling in the Father and the Son, we need but quote one or two out of many illustrative passages from the Word of God. There is one which will suggest itself to every mind, because it was uttered by our Lord himself in his last recorded prayer to his Father, before the closing scene of his sojourn on earth: "Neither," says Jesus, speaking of his first disciples and those who should follow, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." In the thirteenth verse of the fourth chapter of the First Epistle of John, we are told, that "hereby know we that we dwell in God and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit." And in the fifteenth verse of the same chapter we have these words: "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God." And so in the verse which

follows: "And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." "Whoever," says Jesus, speaking of himself alone, "whoever eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood dwelleth in me and I in him."

The same is said of believers with regard to the Holy Spirit. They are in various places represented as dwelling in the Spirit. Addressing the Galatians, the Apostle Paul, in the third verse of the third chapter, says: "Are ye so foolish! having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" And in the sixteenth verse of the fifth chapter of the same Epistle, he exhorts them to "walk in the Spirit." Still more clearly is the truth brought out, that believers dwell or are in the Spirit, just as they dwell or are in the Father and the Son, in the twenty-fifth verse of the same chapter, where the Apostle says: "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." One more illustration is all which it will be necessary to give. It is the striking one contained in the tenth verse of the first chapter of Revelation, where John says: "I was

in the Spirit on the Lord's day." He was, as are all the saints, always in the Spirit, but on the Lord's day here referred to, the Apostle was especially conscious of his being in the Spirit, and especially happy as the result of that consciousness. Now, as all these things are equally true of God, and of Christ, and of the Holy Ghost, the legitimate inference is, that the latter is as much a personal agent as either of the two former.

Of the personality of the Holy Spirit, reasoning from the analogy of language, there is strong collateral proof in the fact of the same terms being employed in reference to the Holy Spirit's coming down from heaven, as are employed with regard to Christ coming down from glory. And here I will confine myself to the illustrations furnished in the fourteenth, fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth chapters of the Gospel of John. In the twenty-sixth verse of the fourteenth chapter, Jesus says, "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." And in the twenty-sixth verse of the fifteenth chapter,

Christ says: "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me." In the seventh verse of the sixteenth chapter, our Lord says: "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you: but if I depart, I will send him unto you." I do not here quote any of the passages of Scripture, in which God is represented as having "sent" His Son from Heaven into the world, because, in my recent work, "GOD IS LOVE," I have gone fully into that description of proof of the Father's eternal and uncaused love for his people. Suffice it here to say, that as the same phraseology is employed by Christ himself, as well as by the writers of the New Testament, respecting the sending of the Holy Spirit from Heaven, by the Father, or by the Son, as is used when speaking of Jesus being sent by God—the obvious conclusion to be come to is, that the Holy Ghost is as strictly to be regarded as an agent or being, as our Lord himself.

But there is another kind of evidence in favour of the personality of the Holy Spirit, to which

it is important we should shortly call attention. To ground an argument for or against any particular proposition, on the primary meaning of a word or phrase, is in many cases most unwise, and has been shown to be unwarranted by certain established facts. The great point, in all matters of the kind, is to ascertain what is the general meaning, or import, in the majority of cases, of particular words or phrases. Acting, then, on this principle, it will be found that the term "spirit" denotes, in the vast majority of cases in which it occurs in the Word of God, an intelligent, conscious, and acting being. In every instance in the Old Testament in which spirits are spoken of, it will be found that the allusions are made to agents, or to beings possessing a moral and mental constitution, which renders them susceptible of emotions similar in some respects in their nature to those which we experience. This is so well known to be the fact, that it is not necessary we should make particular references to individual instances. In the New Testament, also, the spirits we read of are, in every instance, living, active agents. When Jesus was seen walking on the water, His disciples fancied

they had seen a spirit, indicating how vividly in their minds the idea of a being was identified with their notions of spirits. When, too, after Christ's resurrection from the dead, He appeared on a memorable occasion to his disciples, while they were in an upper room, and the door was shut, they concluded that it was a spirit; but He graciously condescended to undeceive them, by saying to them, "Behold my hands and my side, that it is I myself, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as I have." In like manner, when Peter, after having escaped from prison, presented himself at the gate of Mary's house, Rhoda, not believing that he could have got out of prison, did not, from fear, open the gate, but ran to the house, thinking it was a spirit, or Peter's ghost, that she had seen. With regard to those spirits that once were, though now no longer connected with this world, whether they be in heaven above or in the regions below, they are all sentient beings, entirely personal in their nature, feelings, and actions. What are those spirits redeemed from among men, who surround the throne of God, and serve Him day and night? Are they not the same beings, though at present without their bodies, that suffered and

sorrowed on earth? And are not the angels in heaven also agents sent down on particular occasions to the world, to minister to them who are the heirs of salvation? And even those fallen angels, so awfully described in Holy Writ as being reserved in chains of darkness till the judgment of the great day,—even they are persons; for we are told that in the days of Noah, Christ preached to the spirits that were then in prison. Of the same class of beings it is said they believe and tremble,—emotions which conclusively prove the personality of the parties of whom they are predicated. The evil spirits, too, that possessed so many of our fellow-men in the days of the Redeemer's sojourn on earth, were manifestly conscious agents, for they prayed to Him, knew and acknowledged Him to be the Son of the most High God, and deprecated His power to punish them. "Art thou," said some of their number on one memorable occasion, "come to torment us before the time?" "Let us go into the herd of swine." And so with regard to men. When the word "spirit," or "ghost,"—the terms being synonymous—are used in reference to mankind, they almost universally signify the moral or men-

tal part of our nature; in other words, that which constitutes our personality. The bodily form is not necessarily a part of individuality. We retain our personality when the body lies on our bier, or is wasting away in the dust of death. When the martyr Stephen was in the crisis of expiration, he commended his "spirit," or himself, into the hands of Jesus. And when the dying Saviour, hanging on the cross, said to one of his fellow sufferers, "This day shall thou be with me in Paradise," He spoke of the thief's spirit as constituting his person apart from his body; for we all know that not only did his body remain on earth during that day, but was consigned to the grave in the usual way. But it is not necessary to multiply instances. The whole tenor of the Word of God most clearly points to and proves the fact, that when the word "spirit" is applied to men, it means their personality, not an "influence." The belief in spirits as living, active agents is universal. There is hardly a country or a clime in which it does not prevail. And if, then, we find the meaning of "spirit," as illustrated and exemplified in the Sacred Oracles, to mean, in every instance in which it is employed

to men or angels, an intelligent and powerful agent, on what principle can any one suppose that the words "Spirit," "Holy Spirit," or "Holy Ghost," as applied to the "Spirit of God" in the Bible, mean aught but a person or being?

But there are several passages in the New Testament, which so very emphatically set forth the personality of the Holy Ghost, that the wonder is how any one who believes the Scriptures to be a revelation from God, could ever have had a moment's doubt on the subject. So conclusive, indeed, are these passages, that it might have been supposed every true Christian would at once and unreservedly have received them as quite decisive of the question, even were there no other portions of the inspired volume which bore their testimony to the same truth.

The first of these passages is the one which constitutes the commission which Christ gave to His apostles, when He commanded them to make a universal proclamation of the Gospel message. "Go ye," says Jesus unto them, "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things what-

soever I have commanded you, and lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

No words could be more explicit than these. No language could more clearly or more forcibly express the great truth, that the Holy Ghost is an intelligent being, or, in other words, that He possesses those qualities which we understand by the term "person." The man who can so far pervert the plain meaning of terms as to say that he cannot discern any personal agent in the words "Holy Ghost," but simply that an "influence" flowing from the Father is there to be understood, ought, if he would be consistent, contend that the words "of the Father, and of the Son," mean nothing more than mere influences also. The terms are so closely connected, and are so obviously of the same importance, that in whatever sense one is to be understood, the others are to be regarded also. Either the terms "Father and Son" must be understood as only meaning "influences," or the term "Holy Ghost" must be admitted to signify a sentient being. The words, too, let it be remembered, were, as far as Matthew's Gospel is concerned, the last which our Lord delivered on earth. Nor should

the fact be overlooked, that the occasion on which they were uttered was one of the most solemn and interesting which had ever occurred in the history of Christ. He was just on the eve of leaving the world, and He was giving to His apostles a charge which would most deeply—indeed vitally—effect the interests of His kingdom till the end of time. We may therefore feel assured that He would not on such an occasion, and under such circumstances, commission them to make a grievous mistake in the administration of a rite by means of which converts were to be introduced into the Christian Church. If He had meant a person by the “Holy Ghost,” He would never have so employed the words as that they should admit of the construction that they were only intended to denote an “influence.” To baptize into an “influence” or abstraction, would have been altogether unmeaning. Men cannot be baptized into an “influence:” it must be to a person. Besides, there would be a glaring incongruity in baptizing converts from Judaism or heathenism into two *persons* and one *influence*. We can conceive of no association of words which could more explicitly convey the idea than these do, that the Holy

Ghost is as much to be understood, in the passage, as a person or agent, as the Father and the Son themselves. Let me intreat those whose minds may have been painfully exercised with regard to the personality of the Holy Spirit, to attentively and prayerfully study this passage, and I feel a perfect conviction that they will arrive at a conclusion which will at once vindicate the honour of the Holy Spirit and benefit their own souls.

The other passage of Scripture which most explicitly and most emphatically sets forth the personality of the Holy Ghost, is that in the seventh verse of the fifth chapter of the First General Epistle of John : “ And there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one.” I am aware that the authenticity of this passage is disputed by many of our most distinguished and soundest commentators. As to whether it is a part of the inspired Word or not, I will not offer an opinion, because I cannot claim to be considered an authority in matters of Biblical criticism. But it is right I should state, on the other side, that while so many eminent annotators reject the passage as an interpolation, a large, and I believe a growing

number latterly, receive it as part of the written Word of God, and as possessing the same authority as any other portion of the inspired volume. It was so regarded among the early fathers, by Tertullian, Jerome, and St. Cyprian. And here it is right to remark that a special importance is to be attached to the fact of the passage in question having been received by Tertullian as genuine, inasmuch as he flourished towards the latter period of the age in which St. John lived; and it is regarded by commentators and ecclesiastical historians as incontrovertibly certain, that Tertullian must have found the words in the first manuscript of the Epistle. It is of importance, too, not to overlook the fact, so far as we are seeking by this passage to establish the personality of the Holy Ghost, that in the preceding verse the words occur: "And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth." As the word "witness" implies an intelligent agent, the fact of the Spirit being spoken of as a witness in the preceding verse, is to a certain extent a presumptive proof that the passage in question is no interpolation, but genuine. Many, too, of our most celebrated divines, since the time of the

Reformation, and at the present day, express as firm a belief in the thorough genuineness of the passage, as they have in those portions of the Word of God whose authenticity has never been doubted.

But the passage is important as furnishing an indirect proof, of no inconsiderable force, of the personality of the Holy Spirit, even should its claims to canonical authority be rejected. The fact of its being quoted and received by many of the Fathers, early in the second century, shows conclusively that the doctrine of the personality of the Holy Ghost was fully believed at that remote period in the history of the Church of Christ.

There is another passage in the New Testament, in which the personality of the Holy Spirit, in conjunction with that of the Father and the Son, is most clearly set forth. In concluding his Second Epistle to the Corinthians, the Apostle Paul employs this language: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all, Amen." I know not in what way I could express myself so as to bring out more clearly than it is

here done, the idea that the Holy Spirit is as much a person as the Father and Son. I will not, therefore, add one word in the form of comment. Here stands the fact—broadly, explicitly, emphatically stated—that the Holy Spirit and believers have communion with each other. The same truth, that Christians have communion with the Holy Ghost, is also clearly stated, in the first verse of the second chapter of the Epistle to the Philip-pians, where Paul says: “If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies.” Here, again, in conjunction with the consolation which believers have in Christ, and the comfort they have in love,—namely, the love of God the Father,—we have the fellowship or communion which they have with the Holy Spirit set before us in language so explicit, as that its meaning cannot be either mistaken or explained away.

But I now come to what may, to the minds of those believers whose views of the personality of the Holy Spirit may have been somewhat clouded, and consequently at variance with their comfort,—prove the most conclusive evidence of all, that the

Spirit is an agent. I allude to those passages of Scripture in which the Holy Ghost is distinctly spoken of as a person, or in the masculine gender. The instances of this are very numerous. We can only glance at a few. In the sixteenth and seventeenth verses of the fourteenth chapter of the Gospel by John, Jesus says, "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that *he* may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth *him* not, neither knoweth *him*: but ye know *him*; for *he* dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." And in the twenty-sixth verse of the following chapter, Christ says, in language much resembling that which has just been quoted: "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth which (who) proceedeth from the Father, *he* shall testify of me." Then in the chapter succeeding, namely, the sixteenth, there is that emphatic testimony to the personality of the Spirit which is given from the seventh to the fifteenth verses. "Nevertheless I tell you the truth: It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you;

but if I depart, I will send *him* unto you. And when *he* is come, *he* will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when *he*, the Spirit of truth, is come, *he* will guide you into all truth: for *he* shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever *he* shall hear, that shall *he* speak: and *he* will shew you things to come. *He* shall glorify me: for *he* shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that *he* shall take of mine, and shew it unto you.” If this passage stood alone in the Word of God, testifying to the personality of the Holy Ghost, it ought of itself to be sufficient to establish every believer’s mind in the important truth.

Another passage, giving a distinct intimation of the personality of the Holy Ghost by the application of the personal pronoun to the Spirit, will be found in the sixteenth verse of the eighth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. In the fif-

teenth verse it is said that Peter and John prayed that the church of Samaria might receive the Holy Ghost; and then, in the sixteenth, it is added—"For as yet *he* was fallen upon none of them." In the second verse of the thirteenth chapter of the same book, it is said: "As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate *me* Barnabas and Paul for the work whereunto *I* have called them." If ever language successfully embodied a specific idea, it is here done with regard to the personality of the Holy Spirit. "Separate *me*;" "the work whereunto *I* have called them." And the idea of the Spirit's personality is further unfolded, though not in terms so very distinct, in the fourth verse of the same chapter, where we are told that Barnabas and Paul having been separated by the Holy Ghost, and called by *Him* to the work of the ministry, is by the same agent sent forth to proclaim the Gospel message: "So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus."

There is another explicit recognition of the Holy Ghost as a personal agent, in the twenty-seventh verse of the eighth chapter of the Epistle

to the Romans, to which special importance is to be attached, inasmuch as, in two previous verses of the same chapter, the term "it," as before observed, is applied to the Holy Ghost, and consequently some minds have been perplexed in regard to the personality of the Spirit. It is, therefore, satisfactory and consoling to those who prize the doctrine of the Spirit's personality, to find in the twenty-seventh verse a clear recognition of that truth. "And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because *he* maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God." Nothing could be more conclusive as to the Spirit's personality than this. The very fact, indeed, of the Spirit being set before us as having a "mind," would of itself have sufficed to establish the Spirit's personality; but the truth is still more clearly established by the phrase "*he* maketh intercession for the saints." The only remaining proof of the same fact which we shall adduce will be found in the eleventh verse of the twelfth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians. To the passage of which the verse in question forms a part, we have already called attention. The verse is as follows: "But all these

worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as *he* will. The very work which is here ascribed to the Spirit, would of itself be sufficient to establish inferentially the Spirit's personality; for no influence, quality, or power could perform the operations attributed to the Spirit; but, for our still greater confirmation in the precious truth, the Spirit is spoken of in the masculine gender: "Dividing to every man severally as *he* will."

I have thus gone at considerable length into the proofs which the Scriptures set before us of the personality of the Holy Spirit. It is because my mind is profoundly impressed with the importance of having correct views on this point, in conjunction with what I know to be the fearful prevalence of undecided, if not sceptical, notions on the subject, that I have gone so much into detail. Unless those who may favour me by a perusal of this volume should be thoroughly grounded in the truth, that the Spirit is a person or agent, I should indeed have but feeble hopes, if hopes at all, that what I say in my subsequent pages respecting the work of the Spirit, will be attended with those happy results which it is my

fervent prayer may follow the reading of the volume. But I fondly trust that I have not laboured in vain in my endeavours to establish the cardinal truth of the Spirit's personality ; and, if so, I may be permitted to hope, through the Spirit's own agency, for the happiest effects from a prayerful perusal of the book.

In having thus adverted at some length to the numerous and conclusive proofs with which the Scriptures abound respecting the personality of the Holy Spirit, I am anxious it should not be forgotten that I have been obliged to omit all reference to many passages which furnish collateral proof of the important fact. The claims on our attention which other aspects of the question respecting the place which the Holy Spirit has in the Word of God, whether viewed in connection with His character or His work, have rendered it necessary that I should not go so fully into the one question of the Holy Ghost's personality, as I might otherwise have done. But I trust that no one, on the other hand, will think I have gone at too great length into the subject. It is one of the very greatest importance. With the magnitude of its importance my own mind is, and has

been for many years, overwhelmingly impressed. It lies at the root of all real religion. If our minds be not settled on the subject of the Spirit's personality, we never can have right views or Scriptural perceptions of His character or work. The rejection of the doctrine of the Spirit's personality seems to me to involve, as a necessary consequence, the rejection of his proper Deity or Godhead; for, if the Spirit is to be regarded as a mere "influence," or quality, or power, the Spirit cannot be God, inasmuch as God is no mere "influence," quality, or power. And if the Divinity of the Holy Ghost be given up, all our notions of the Spirit's work must degenerate into views of the most unworthy and most uncomfortable kind. Let me, therefore, if there be one single reader who, notwithstanding the vast array of arguments by which I have sought to establish the great truth, has still his doubts and misgivings on the subject,—let me, with all the earnestness of which my mind and heart are susceptible, implore such reader to resort to the throne of grace before proceeding one step further in the perusal of this volume,—praying that God would be graciously pleased to enlighten his understanding, and im-

press his heart on the subject of the Holy Spirit's personality. In other words, let every perplexed or doubtful believer on this point, pray with all fervour, with great frequency, and with an unwearied perseverance, that he may by the Holy Ghost's own tuition be taught what is "the mind of the Spirit" with regard to the Spirit. Such prayers cannot fail to be answered, nor can there be a doubt as to what the kind of answer will be.

CHAPTER IV.

THE DIVINITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

As there are many believers whose views of the personality of the Holy Spirit are far from being free from obscurity, though they would be shocked at the thought of their denying that the Spirit is an agent,—so there are many, I am no less convinced, whose views of the Divinity or proper Deity of the Holy Spirit are dim and indistinct, though they are not themselves, it may be, conscious of the fact. Ask them what they think of the Holy Ghost, with regard to His Divinity, and they will at once, and truthfully too, answer, that they believe in His Godhead as well as in His personality. But if they are only led to search their own mind more thoroughly, and watch with jealous care the thoughts which pass through it, respecting the Third Person of the glorious Trinity, it will be found that they have, if not always, at particular times, very imperfect

perceptions of the Deity of the Holy Spirit. There is a latent idea in their minds, that though He is Divine, there is an indefinable sort of inferiority in His Divinity, as compared with God the Father, and it may be, also, as compared with God the Son. Their views of the Holy Ghost in this respect, both in relation to God and to Christ, resemble in some degree those which some persons entertain respecting Christ, as compared with God. Many persons embrace the doctrine of Christ's Divinity, and would recoil at the idea that they denied it, who, nevertheless, only regard the Son as Divine in a subordinate sense to the Divinity of the Father. Those do so who have adopted what is called the indwelling scheme, which means that Jesus was Divine in virtue of the indwelling of the Godhead in Him, communicated and continued in a way which we cannot comprehend. This theory is not only at variance with the whole tenor of Scripture, but is utterly and irreconcilably opposed to reason; for the very idea of a created or derived Deity is a contradiction. It would be a self-evident impossibility. And so with regard to the Holy Ghost,—if He be Divine at all, He must be essentially and properly so. There can-

not in the nature of things be an inferior divinity. The very word Deity necessarily involves the doctrine of a proper or perfect Godhead. The Son, if Divine at all, must be co-equal in all the glory of His Deity with the Father, and the Spirit, if possessing the attributes of the Godhead at all, must possess them equally with the Father and the Son.

The notion that Christ, though Divine, is in an undefinable sense subordinate to God, and that the Spirit, though also Divine, is in some way, incomprehensible to us, inferior to both the Father and the Son, is chiefly the result of meditating on those portions of Scripture which speak of Jesus as having been sent into the world by the Father, and of the Holy Spirit, as sent, sometimes by the Father, and sometimes by the Son. A moment's reflection will suffice to show how utterly devoid of reason such a conclusion from such premises is. The mode of expression referred to, is employed merely in adaptation to our limited faculties, and with the view of bringing vividly before our minds what is called the economy of man's redemption. God the Father planned that work, as I have shown at length in my previous volume, "God

is LOVE ;” the Son undertook, in the councils of eternity, to carry the scheme of the Father into effect, and fulfilled His undertaking in the fulness of time ; and to the Holy Spirit was confided the task—to which He was no less self-appointed than was Christ to His—of bringing home to the hearts of sinners, with saving efficacy, the redemption which the Father had so devised, and which the Son had executed. When, therefore, we read of Christ being sent by the Father into our world, the expression does not imply that He was inferior to the Father, or authoritatively sent by Him. It merely means that he had come to our earth on a mission of boundless mercy to mankind, in terms of a covenant engagement or understanding with the Father. His coming was purely voluntary. Had it been otherwise, He would have come in vain. Had He descended to earth in virtue of any superior authority on the part of the Father, the whole scheme of salvation would have failed. The law required, as indispensably necessary to the efficacy of Christ’s atonement, that His appearance in our world, His humiliation, His sufferings, and His death, should all be perfectly spontaneous. That it was so, Jesus himself re-

peatedly and explicitly declared when on earth. Everywhere in the evangelistic narrative, He speaks as having come down of his own free will from heaven, to rescue a ruined race, just as in the councils of eternity we hear Him saying to His Father, when God was devising in His own mind how a revolted world might be reclaimed and redeemed, "Lo, here am I, send me." In accordance with this view of Christ's coming spontaneously from heaven, are those memorable words in which He says, "I have power to lay down my life and to take it up again;" words which indicate in the clearest manner that Jesus was under no constraint, nor in any way influenced by the authority of the Father in what He did, but acted from first to last, from the moment He quitted the bosom of His Father in glory, till He expired on the cross, as a purely free agent. And not only was this so, but among the latest words which fell from His gracious lips were these: "For this cause," namely, that He might die an excruciating and ignominious death, "came I unto this hour."

And so with regard to the Holy Spirit. When He is said to be sent by the Father or the Son,

it is simply to indicate the order of procedure on the part of a Triune God, in carrying out the work of man's redemption. It no more implies inferiority on the part of the Holy Spirit to either the Father or the Son, than the fact of Christ's being said to have been sent into the world by God, involves inferiority on the part of Jesus to the Father. But the important truth—that the Holy Ghost is essentially Divine, in other words, is co-equal with the Father and the Son—is made demonstrably manifest from those portions of Scripture in which the same qualities are ascribed to Him as are possessed by God and Christ, and the same works attributed to His agency as to theirs. First of all, the adjective *eternal* is applied to the Holy Ghost. "Who, through the *eternal* Spirit," says Paul, speaking of Christ, "offered up himself a sacrifice to God." The very fact of the Spirit being eternal shows that He was not created, and if not created, it is impossible logically to believe Him to be inferior to the Father. Eternity can be predicated of the essential God-head alone.

The Holy Ghost has also the attribute of *omnipresence* ascribed to Him. "Whither," says

David, "shall I go from thy Spirit, or whither shall I flee from thy presence?" There was no part of God's illimitable universe to which it were possible to resort without finding the presence of the Holy Spirit there. The same truth—namely, the Spirit's presence everywhere—is brought out inferentially by the expression of the Apostle Paul, when he said to the Christians at Corinth, "Ye are the temples of the Holy Ghost. What was true in this respect of the Corinthian believers, is no less true now of all real Christians ; and therefore, if the Holy Spirit dwells in *all* believers, He must be omnipresent. Now, as omnipresence is an attribute which belongs to God alone, it follows that the Holy Spirit is essentially God.

And so with regard to the qualities of *prescience* and *omniscience*. Not only is the Spirit described as knowing intimately all things pertaining to the mind of man, but He is said to search and know all things. None but a being who is God could know *all* things, even the deep things of God. The Spirit also testified beforehand—which the loftiest archangel could not do—the sufferings of Christ, and the glory which should follow. And as none but God is thus omniscient,

the unavoidable inference is, that the Holy Ghost is essentially and properly Divine.

Not less are the works which are ascribed to God in the Bible, attributed to the Holy Spirit. God is the creator of the world. The same creative power is predicated of the Spirit, in the passage quoted in our first chapter, where he is represented as having moved on the face of the waters. In other parts of Scripture the Holy Spirit is distinctly set before us as having been engaged in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and of man. The Father, as was shown in the previous chapter, quickens the sinner dead in trespasses and in sin. But the same idea is perhaps more forcibly expressed by those portions of the inspired volume which speak of the regeneration of the sinner, and especially when that change is referred to as a new birth, or being born again. Those who experience this transformation are very frequently spoken of under this emblem. They are said to be born of God. So they are represented as being born of the Spirit. Jesus himself ascribes the new birth to the operation of the Holy Spirit; and Paul says that he that is born of the Spirit is spirit—that is, becomes

spiritually-minded. The plain inference therefore is, that as the same work is here ascribed to the Father and the Spirit, the Spirit must, like the Father, be Divine. I am aware that the new birth is also attributed to water and to the Word of God. But no one can be led by these expressions into the notion that either the "water" or the Word is an effective agent in the transformation of any unconverted person. It is literally impossible that mere water could accomplish the change. The expression, as before remarked, "born of water," manifestly means : that water, as used in baptism, is emblematic of the new birth ; while with regard to the expression of being "born of the Word of God," that evidently means born through or by means of the Word of God. The Word is simply the instrument employed by the Holy Spirit as a Divine agent. The mere Word itself is wholly powerless. It can make no impression whatever on the heart of man. Unaccompanied by the Spirit, it only deadens or kills. Hence Paul says, "that the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life." God enlightens, instructs, sanctifies, comforts, and establishes in the faith, those who have believed

in Christ. All these works are no less ascribed to the operation of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, it is more especially His province to do this in the economy of man's redemption, than it is that of either the Father or the Son. These, it is obvious, are severally works which no created intelligence could accomplish. The agent that can perform such things must of necessity be Divine; and as they are accomplished by the Spirit, and are indeed, as has just been remarked, especially His work, it follows that the Holy Ghost is partaker, in their fullest perfection, if we may so express ourselves, of the essential qualities of the Godhead.

Here let me pause for a few moments to remark, that of all the specific works which are ascribed to the operation of the Spirit of God, there is none so marvellous, nor requiring so great a display of power, as the conversion or new birth of the sinner. Compared with the regeneration of man's fallen nature, and his rescue from the grasp of Satan, the creation of a world is but a feeble triumph of power. The angels in heaven are said to excel in strength, and their number far transcends our utmost capabilities of computation,

but were they a million times as numerous as they are, and were all their moral might concentrated and brought to bear on the regeneration of the soul that lies in sin, they would find themselves wholly unable to accomplish the task. Not only could they not accomplish the moral transformation, but they could not succeed in making even an approach to the achievement of the wondrous work. None but a Divine, none but an Almighty power, which that of angels is not, ever yet achieved the conversion of a single sinner, or ever will. Everywhere conversion is ascribed to God, or to the Spirit of God, and therefore the Holy Ghost must be Divine—must possess all the essential attributes of the Godhead.

In connection with this aspect of the subject, and as strongly corroborative of our views, let us call attention to that portion of Holy Writ in which God himself is represented as saying, in reference to the regeneration of a ruined race; “Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord.” I fear that this verse is often read without its full meaning being perceived. It not only unfolds, in terms the most explicit and emphatic, the sovereignty of Divine grace

in the salvation of the sinner, but it specifically and forcibly sets forth the great truth, that nothing short of the Spirit of God can achieve a saving change in the condition of the unregenerate; and, therefore, we are conducted to the conclusion, that the Holy Spirit is God. "Not by might," nor by the might of human learning, eloquence, oratory, argument or intellect, no matter of how high an order, "but by my Spirit," can the soul of the sinner be renovated, sanctified, and saved. Not "by power" of any kind or from any quarter. Not even by the power of the entire race of angelic intelligences, were that power, as before remarked, to be concentrated and directed towards the renewal of man's moral nature and his ultimate salvation, could the object be accomplished. The Spirit of God is alone competent to the work. "But by my Spirit, saith the Lord." What then, let me ask, could be more evident than that, if the salvation of the sinner cannot be effected by either human, or angelic, or any other created agency, the agency which can and does effect it, is Divine? The Spirit of God is the agent by whom the work can be and is achieved. And, therefore, the Spirit of God must

be perfectly and essentially God. I do not remember to have seen these last two passages of Scripture referred to by theological writers, as proving the Divinity of the Holy Spirit. To my mind, they are indirectly demonstrative of the Spirit's perfect Deity.

But the Godhead of the Spirit is distinctly stated in particular passages of Scripture. There is one which, did it stand alone, would, to my mind, suffice to place the Divinity of the Holy Ghost beyond all possibility of doubt. I allude to the seventeenth verse of the third chapter of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, where Paul says: "Now the Lord is that Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." The Apostle, in the preceding parts of the chapter, had been speaking of the Spirit and of Christ, and then employs the words we have quoted. Nothing could be more clear from this verse, than that the Spirit is Divine, for He is represented as identical with Christ—as being Christ—just as we all believe the three Persons in the Godhead to be identical in their essence, though distinct in their developments or manifestations. Dr. Doddridge, and other expositors of the highest character, are

of opinion that the passage ought to be translated "the Lord the Spirit." They say it is so in the original. Be that as it may, it is enough for us to know, that in either case the essential equality of the Holy Ghost with Christ, and consequently with God, is fully and firmly established. I have called especial attention to this verse, because I know there are many of God's people whose minds are often perplexed and grieved at the circumstance of not being able to refer to a single text of Scripture in which the Holy Ghost is distinctly, or in so many words, called God. They plaintively tell us that they meet with the words "God the Holy Ghost" and "God the Spirit" in the formularies of the Church of England, and in the works of our most approved divines, but that they search in vain for such phraseology in the Word of God. It must be admitted that the expression "God the Holy Ghost," or "God the Spirit," is not to be found in either of the Testaments; but that ought not to trouble the mind of any Christian. Why should the believer be depressed or disappointed that he cannot find in the Bible any particular phraseology, if he meets with the distinct assertion of the truth which the

words he wishes were to be found in the Bible, distinctly enunciate and affirm ?

There is another portion of Scripture which, though I have never seen it especially referred to as demonstrative of the perfect Divinity of the Holy Spirit, is, to my mind, inferentially as conclusive on that point as words could make it. I allude to the thirty-first and thirty-second verses of the twelfth chapter of the Gospel by Matthew, where it is said : “ Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men ; but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him : but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.” The evangelist, or rather Christ himself, had been previously speaking of those who had ascribed the miracles of mercy which Jesus had wrought to the agency of Satan, while He had sought to impress upon them that they were the result of the operation of the Spirit of God. Jesus Christ described the sin in question as the greatest of all sins,—as guilt of the deepest

die which man could contract. It was giving, in a sense, the glory to Satan which belonged to Jesus, acting by or through the Holy Spirit. There is something very remarkable in the statement of our Lord, that while all other sins might be forgiven, especially specifying sins committed against Himself, the sin against the Holy Ghost could never be forgiven. And to make the assurance still more emphatic, Jesus added, "Neither in this world, nor in the world which is to come." I could not, as I have already said, conceive of any mode of expression which could more explicitly or emphatically set forth the proper Deity of the Holy Spirit. If to sin against the Holy Ghost be the greatest sin which can be committed, the Holy Ghost must of necessity possess all the attributes of the Godhead in, if we may so express ourselves, their highest perfection or greatest glory.

Let us now come to those passages of Holy Writ in which the names of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are associated together under circumstances, and in terms, which clearly indicate a perfect co-equality on the part of the Three, and which consequently prove the perfect Deity of the Spirit. These passages were referred

to in my previous chapter, as conclusively establishing the fact of the Spirit's personality. One of them is the words in which Christ gave His commission to His disciples to preach the Gospel to every creature, and to disciple all nations. "Go ye," He says, "into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." The identity of the nature of the Three is demonstrably established by the use of the word "name." It is in the singular, not the plural number. The "name," not names. No language could more emphatically enunciate the great and blessed doctrine of the Trinity in unity. The Three are one: the Three are equal: the Holy Spirit is no less God than the Father and the Son.

Similar in substance, though different in words, is the passage in the fifth chapter of the First Epistle of John, which, like the preceding passage, was also quoted for the purpose of proving the personality of the Spirit: "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one." No comment is needed here. No language could

more expressly affirm the unity or equality of the three Persons in the Godhead, and consequently, none more emphatically the Divinity of the Holy Spirit.

To the same effect, though not in terms so explicit, is the apostolic benediction: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen." This has also been quoted by us as one of the many proofs with which the Scriptures abound, of the personality of the Spirit. It is no less conclusive on the subject of the Spirit's Divinity. This will be made abundantly evident when I refer to the passage, which I shall do presently, as showing that the Holy Spirit may be exclusively or distinctly addressed in prayer.

I am aware that the minds of some Christians are troubled because we do not so frequently read of the fellowship or communion of the Spirit, as we do of the fellowship or communion of the Father and the Son. A moment's reflection ought to remove their disquietude. It should be enough for us to learn that the communion of the Spirit with believers is as broadly stated in

the passage which has been quoted, as “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God,” are affirmed. But besides this, we read in the Epistle to the Philippians of the fellowship of the Spirit, in association with the Father and the Son. “If there be,” says Paul, in the first verse of the second chapter of his Epistle to the church at Philippi, “If there be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort in love,”—most manifestly the love of the Father,—“if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy,” &c. But even were these distinct or indirect recognitions of the communion which the saints have with the Holy Ghost, less frequent in Scripture than they are, that ought not to cause the slightest disquietude in their minds, because it is to be remembered, as will be more fully shown in a subsequent chapter, that it is especially the province of the Spirit to lead believers to the enjoyment of fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. There is hardly a page of the inspired volume in which this truth is not more or less prominently brought out. The Spirit takes of the things of Christ, and shows them unto us. He directs the soul

to God through Christ. We have access through Jesus by the Spirit unto the Father. But as regards communion with the Holy Ghost himself, —though the specific references to it are not numerous in God's Word, the fact that such communion is to be had, and is enjoyed by all believers, is revealed in passages which speak of the Spirit dwelling in their minds and hearts, and by their being filled with the Spirit. But this is a point on which I shall hereafter speak at greater length, and with greater propriety, in an after-part of the volume.

In the third, fourth, and fifth verses of the third chapter of the Second Epistle to the same church of Thessalonica, we meet with phraseology strikingly similar to that which has just been quoted. "But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil. And we have confidence in the Lord touching you, that ye both do and will do the things which we command you. And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ." It will be here remarked, that the expression "the Lord," occurs in the verses three times. "The Lord" is to do three things. He would "stablish" the

church at Thessalonica, and keep them from evil ; and He would direct their hearts into the love of God, and patient waiting for Christ. This, again, is pre-eminently the province of the Holy Spirit, which fact affords presumptive evidence that by the words "the Lord" the Holy Spirit is to be understood. But that view of the passage acquires a probability amounting to a moral certainty, when it is observed how that "the Lord" was to direct the hearts of the Thessalonians "into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ." It is obviously of a Divine agent that Paul here speaks, and as that agent cannot, with any regard to the proprieties of language, be viewed as either the Father or the Son, He must be the Holy Spirit.

It has been and is the subject of no small anxiety to many of the saints of God, whether the Holy Spirit may be addressed in prayer in the same way as the Father and the Son. The perplexity of such believers chiefly arises from the circumstance of there being neither any specific command for praying to the Holy Spirit, nor any pointed example. That it is proper to pray to the Spirit, appears to my mind as clear as any religious truth need be.

If He be essentially Divine, equal with the Father and the Son, as we trust we have shown Him to be, there can be no reason whatever to doubt that He may, with all propriety, be addressed in prayer. And though there be no examples in the Word of God so striking as to make an impression on the mind the moment they are met with, any more than there are positive precepts to pray to the Holy Spirit, yet I think there are indirect examples to authorize our approaches in prayer to the Holy Spirit. The apostolic benediction, which has just been quoted—"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all,"—appears to me, when the words are duly weighed in all their bearings, to be quite decisive on the point. The apostle, it will be observed, does not invoke either of the Three Persons in the Trinity alone, nor does he implore a blessing on the Corinthian church from the Three collectively. He asks a Divine blessing of a special kind from each of the Three. From the Lord Jesus Christ he asks "grace;" from God the Father, "love;" and from the Holy Spirit, "communion" with Himself. Nothing, therefore, could, to my mind, be

more manifest than that the apostle here addresses the Holy Spirit, just as much, and in the same sense, as he does the Father and the Son. And it can hardly be necessary to say, that what the Apostle Paul did, believers in all ages of the world may do likewise.

There is another passage of Scripture which is no less conclusive on this point. It is in the First Epistle to the Thessalonians, the third chapter, and eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth verses: "Now God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you. And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you: to the end he may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints." I think that no one who attentively reads this passage can doubt that by "the Lord" is here meant the Holy Spirit. It will be observed, that in the verse preceding that in which the words occur, God the Father and Jesus Christ are distinctly named, and therefore, when the expression "the Lord," occurs immediately after them, the natural inference is, that it

is the third Person of the Trinity to whom the phrase is meant to apply. And this construction of the passage receives strong confirmation from what follows in the thirteenth verse, or the one which concludes the chapter, "To the end that he"—that is, "the Lord"—"may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." Here is a definite and important work to be done—a work which the Scriptures everywhere represent as coming within the special province of the Holy Ghost, and that work is done by an agent designated "the Lord," and manifestly distinct from the Father and the Son. As, therefore, the work accomplished by this agent could only be done by one possessing Divine power, and as the agent called "the Lord" is associated with God and Christ, there is no other conclusion at which, so far as my judgment may be trusted, any candid inquirer can arrive, than that the Holy Spirit is here referred to—that the Holy Spirit is Divine—and is a proper object of worship ; for it is to Him that the apostle here addresses himself, and from Him that He supplicates the unspeakably important blessings which are specified.

But while we hold that from the very nature of the Holy Spirit, as well as from the examples of virtual prayer to Him, to which we have referred, He is a fit subject to be addressed when on our bended knees, or sending up our silent ejaculations to heaven, it is right we should record our conviction that the established order of Scripture in reference to the prayers of God's people is, that they should be especially addressed to God the Father. The Scriptural order is, that we should come to the Father through the Son, and by the Holy Spirit. Hence it will be observed, that though we may address the Spirit as the Deity, just as we may address the Son as a Divine being, yet the instances of direct exclusive prayer to Jesus are comparatively rare. In the very great majority of cases, we find that God the Father is regarded as the special or primary object of prayer. We are to look up to God, and draw near to Him through the medium of Christ, as the Holy Spirit shall enable us to pour out our hearts to the Father. It must never be forgotten by the people of God, that no sinful creature can approach the Deity except by a Mediator, even the Lord Jesus Christ. Out of Christ, God is represented as a consuming fire. We dare not

draw near to Him in any other way than through the merits and mediation of the Lord Jesus, just as we dare not ask Him to look upon us through any other medium than the face of His anointed. It is one of the great offices of the Holy Ghost to enable us thus to approach God, with reverence and with filial fear, through the Lord Jesus Christ. It is of the utmost importance for believers to remember, that they cannot with propriety pray to Jesus as God, except through Himself as the God-man, the Mediator. Nor can we, if we would act in accordance with the revelations of Scripture, approach the Holy Spirit in prayer, except through the mediation of Jesus Christ. It is therefore plain that the natural order of worship is, that we should come direct to God the Father, through Christ the Son, by the Holy Ghost. Jesus himself, in the prayer which He gave to His disciples as the great model of their addresses to the throne of grace, and not to them only, but to all Christians till the end of time, taught them to pray to their "Father which art in heaven;" and on another occasion, he told them that whatsoever they asked the Father in His name He would do it unto them. As if He had said, "It is fitting you should ask God the

Father for all blessings, but you are to do it in my name and for my sake, and in consideration of my merits and mediation. Then I will do it unto you, or bestow on you the blessings which you supplicated. I have the right, in virtue of my Godhead or perfect equality with the Father, to give you whatever you ask; but as I sustain, in virtue of covenant relations entered into between the Father and myself from all eternity, the character of Mediator between God and man, it is right you should directly ask Him through me for whatever you need, and He will say to me, ‘Bestow it upon them.’” Elsewhere our adorable Lord says: “I am the way, the truth and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me.” We are represented as accepted in the Beloved. Our prayers, no less than our persons, are accepted in Christ Jesus. Believers are so accepted, because, being arrayed in the rich and royal robe of the Redeemer’s righteousness, they are regarded in the same light as if they had never sinned. And thus it is that they have confidence in drawing near to God; they have access through Christ, by one Spirit, unto the Father. And the practice, let me here remark, of Chris-

tians of all evangelical denominations, is in accordance with this Scriptural order of things. We all go to God through Christ, by the Spirit. God hears and answers our prayers ; Christ has opened, and keeps open, the way of access to the Father, and the Holy Spirit enlightens our minds to ask those things of which we stand in need, and fills our hearts with that fervency of desire, and that devotional fire, which are well-pleasing to our Father in heaven.

I have thus adverted at some length to the character of the Holy Spirit, embracing in the term both His Personality and proper Deity. I have sought with great earnestness of desire to bring before the minds of my readers right views with regard to the Holy Spirit, not only because I know, as I remarked in the beginning of my book, that very obscure and unsatisfactory notions prevail respecting His character, to a very lamentable extent ; but because I am profoundly impressed with the conviction, that the believer's views of His work must depend on the views which are entertained of His character. If we have low or misty views of the character of the Holy Ghost, we must inevitably have low and misty views of

His work. The value of the Spirit's work depends entirely on the glory of His character. If the Spirit were but a mere "influence," or, being an agent, were anything short of essentially God, the worth of his work would of necessity correspondingly diminish in our eyes. An inferior deityship, were that possible, which it is not, would dim the glory which encircles the Holy Ghost, when regarded by us as truly and properly divine, co-equal in essence with the Father and the Son, though occupying a distinct place in the economy of human redemption. It is a glorious truth, that the Holy Spirit is not only an intelligent agent, but that He possesses all the essential qualities of God and Christ; of the latter only, of course, as respects His Divine nature. Were the Spirit aught else—were there any measure of inferiority, however small, as regards His essence, to the Father and the Son, the Christian never could rejoice in Him as he does. He would be ever and anon assailed with doubts and fears respecting the efficiency of that sealing "until the day of redemption," of which the Scriptures speak; for the believer, knowing the corruptions of his own nature, even though in a great mea-

sure by grace renewed, and how subtle, and untiring, and powerful Satan is for purposes of evil, he feels that nothing short of an agent who is in the highest sense God, could ever insure his ultimate salvation. But we fondly trust, we have succeeded in satisfying all who have read the preceding pages, that the Holy Spirit is not only a being, but a *Divine* being, in the largest and loftiest acceptation of the term, even co-equal with the Father and the Son, and therefore Almighty, to insure the salvation of the saints. In other words, if, in the providence of God, any one has been led to the perusal of this work, whose mind may have been either in a state of uncertainty with regard to the Personality and perfect Deity of the Holy Spirit, or who may have gone so far as to regard Him only as an "influence," I do hope that the arguments I have advanced in favour of the Personality and true Divinity of the Holy Ghost, have had the effect of establishing such a one in the faith of these two essential truths in connection with the grand scheme of man's salvation. But if there should be, unhappily, a single reader who still cleaves to the notion that the Spirit of God is nothing more than a

mere "influence" or quality, then let me earnestly implore the candid consideration of such a reader to the effects which are produced by those pulpit ministrations or books, in which the "influence" view is maintained, compared with the effects produced by pulpit ministrations and publications, in which the Personality and proper Deity of the Holy Spirit are enunciated and enforced. On the comparative results produced by these two classes of doctrine, I am prepared to stake the issue. I am willing that the views I entertain on the subject, should stand or fall by the result of the appeal to the effects of the two kinds of belief on the minds of men. All ecclesiastical history is explicit and emphatic in its utterances on the point. Unitarians and Rationalists, and all others, no matter by what name they may call themselves, who have adopted and inculcate the theory that the Holy Spirit is only an "influence" proceeding from God, and not a person or being, never produce by their preaching or writings those mighty spiritual changes which we call conversion. Their ministrations may sometimes have the effect of improving the moral or social character of those to whom they are addressed ; but mere philosophy

without the slightest connection with revealed religion, frequently produces that effect. But a slight reformation of the external conduct, or even a better regulation of the mental and moral feelings, is not conversion. What alone the New Testament recognizes as conversion is that thorough change of heart and life which is preceded by deep convictions of sin, and a lively apprehension of imminent danger of perishing for ever. In other words, Scriptural conversion is preceded, as was the case with the three thousand converted under Peter's sermon, by being pricked to the heart, and crying out mentally, if not audibly, under feelings of deep alarm, "What must we do to be saved?" Not one instance of results of this nature can be adduced, either in ecclesiastical history or in the biographies of individuals, as having been brought about by the preaching or publications of those who hold the doctrine that the Holy Spirit is purely an "influence," and not a person or being.

On the other hand, the uniform testimony of our accredited religious annals is clear and decided in favour of this fact, that wherever the Personality and proper Godhead of the Spirit

have had a prominent place assigned them in the pulpit ministrations or writings of religious teachers, the work of conversion, in the comprehensive sense in which we understand the term, has been accomplished to an extent proportioned to the frequency and fullness with which the Personality and Divinity of the Holy Spirit have been enunciated and inculcated. This is a great fact. It is so plain, so palpable, so undoubted, that no one can deny it. All the extensive revivals of religion, such as were witnessed in the days of Wesley and Whitefield in our own country, and in the time of Jonathan Edwards in America, and of which, in the latter country, we have a glorious repetition at this moment,—all these revivals on an extensive scale, and all those more restricted revivals which are constantly taking place in particular congregations or in specific localities, are invariably preceded by a prominent statement and earnest enforcement of the Personality and Deity of the Holy Ghost. And, what is more,—no solitary case of conversion, in the instances referred to, can be named, in which the party who has undergone the saving change has not cordially embraced the doctrine of the Spirit's Personality and proper Deity. Now, I put it to any reasonable

mind whether, if those who entertain and promulgate the hypothesis that the Spirit is only an "influence," had come to a right conclusion, God would never manifestly own their teachings in effecting that new birth which is indispensable to our admission into the kingdom of heaven? And I would farther ask whether, on the other hand, any one can, with even the slightest show of reason, maintain that if the doctrines of the Spirit's Personality and Divinity were not the doctrines of the Scripture, and consequently in accordance with the mind of God, He would have, in all ages of the Church, in a manner so manifest and so marked, crowned the preaching of such doctrines with the signal success which we know has attended them? It were to do deep dishonour to God, to suppose, on the one hand, that He would not own and bless the doctrine of the Spirit's being a mere "influence," were such the fact; or to assume, on the other, that he would so eminently own, acknowledge, and bless the doctrines of the Holy Ghost's Personality and of His proper Divinity, were the Spirit neither a sentient being nor Divine. There is no getting over this mode of putting the argument. We may, as I have already said, confidently rest the issue on it. It

is a fair and conclusive test. God never vouchsafes His blessing to error: that would be contrary to His very nature, and therefore becomes a moral impossibility. He only accompanies with His special blessing that which is His own truth. A tree is known by its fruits. "By their fruits shall ye know them;" and therefore, when we see no saving or sanctifying results, springing from the inculcation of the "influence" theory of the Holy Spirit, while, on the other hand, we see not only individuals in detail, but oftentimes vast multitudes, simultaneously and thoroughly transformed in their character—becoming, indeed, entirely new creatures in a spiritual sense—by the enunciation and enforcement of the doctrine, that the Holy Ghost is a Person and truly Divine,—when, I repeat, we see every day of our lives that no important spiritual effects spring from the exhibition and advocacy of the "influence" hypothesis, and witness, on the other hand, the mightiest moral results flowing from the belief in the Spirit's Personality and perfect Deity,—who can any longer, with any appearance of reason, resist the conviction that the former view is wholly opposed to the truth, and that the latter is in entire accordance with it?

CHAPTER V.

THE HOLY SPIRIT, CONSIDERED AS THE AGENT
BY WHOM SINNERS ARE CONVINCED AND CON-
VERTED.

WE have made incidental references, in the preceding chapter, to the great truth, that the Holy Spirit alone is the agent through whose operations the heart of man is savingly renewed. It is the Spirit alone that quickeneth the soul which is dead in trespasses and sins. It is He who achieves the work of regeneration. All who are born again are born of the Spirit. This is a truth so fully, so frequently, and so emphatically revealed in both parts of the Bible, that no one ever for a moment doubts it. The work, it is true, is sometimes ascribed to God the Father, and in a few instances less directly to Jesus Christ,—just as any act of grace may be attributed to either of the Divine Three, separately or collectively, inasmuch as all are equal, and all are in perfect accord in the work of man's salvation, in its various stages,

from first to last. But as each Person of the glorious Trinity has His separate province appointed Him in that Divine economy which secures the redemption of a ruined race, so it is the special work of the Holy Ghost to convert the soul that lieth in sin. No sinner was ever yet converted, or ever will be, through any other agency than that of the Holy Spirit. There is, in some respects, a certain order of procedure which the Spirit of God adopts in effecting the great work of the sinner's conversion. The first invariable step which He takes towards the accomplishment of His purpose, is by convincing the subject of His saving operations, of sin. Hence the Lord Jesus, when, immediately before the closing scene of His existence, He promised to send the Holy Spirit as soon as He had returned to glory, and to His Father and His God, distinctly and emphatically stated, that one of the great objects for which the Spirit was to be sent from heaven, would be to convince the world of sin. "And when he is come," said our Lord, "he will convince the world of sin, of righteousness and judgment. Of sin," he added, "because they believe not in me." From this it is evident, not to allude

to numerous other passages of Scripture, in which the same truth is distinctly enunciated and broadly affirmed, that the very first step which the Holy Spirit takes in the work of conversion, is to convince the sinner of the greatness of his guilt. I am aware that there are several cases of sudden conversions recorded in Scripture, respecting which, it may be said, that, owing to the very fact of their being so sudden—in one or two cases almost instantaneous—there could not have been much of strong convictions of sin, previous to the accomplishment of the great moral change. We are not to limit the Holy One of Israel in any of His acts, and therefore not in the work which He accomplishes by means of His Spirit in the regeneration of sinners. But though, in cases of exceedingly sudden conversion—such as that of Saul of Tarsus, the thief on the cross, the three thousand who were converted in one day, and the Philippian jailor,—the sinner's conviction of the greatness of his guilt must necessarily be of brief duration before he undergoes the change, yet it is proved, beyond all controversy, that powerful convictions are invariably experienced. When Paul was struck to the ground by a miraculous

interposition of mercy, on his way to Damascus, and he asked, in answer to the voice that spake to him, "Who art thou, Lord?" the voice replied, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest,"—can any one doubt that Saul at that moment, as soon as he had heard the words, saw with a terrible clearness the magnitude of his guilt? The words which follow set the fact in the clearest possible light: "And he," we are told, "trembling and astonished, said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" The trembling which came over his spirit, and the astonishment which seized his soul, may have been in some measure the effects of the extraordinary circumstances which had so suddenly and unexpectedly occurred: but they were undoubtedly to be mainly ascribed to the influence of that flood of light which had, all at once, in so miraculous a manner, been let into his mind. Nor could it be otherwise: for the very answer which Jesus gave to his question, "Who art thou, Lord?" viz. "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest,"—must have brought home to his mind with overwhelming power, the conviction of the enormity of that sin of which he had been guilty, in persecuting Christ in the persons of His friends

and followers. The remembrance of those threatenings and slaughters which he had breathed out against them, and of that fierce and implacable enmity which he had felt and shown to all who were the disciples of Jesus, would rush with a fearful force on his mind. And to feel that, in his previous persecutions of them, he had in effect no less persecuted Jesus himself, would inevitably produce a tumult in his mind of which none but sinners of the deepest die can form any conception.

Then, again, with regard to the thief on the cross, whom Christ saved just at the last moment, though we have not such decisive testimony to the convictions of sin which he felt, as we have in the case of Saul of Tarsus when he was converted, yet enough is written to prove that he also had a distinct perception of his guilt before God. When his impenitent companion in crime and punishment persisted in railing at and reviling the Redeemer on the cross—that gracious Redeemer, who would have rescued him also, if he had been but willing, from that eternal perdition into which he was on the eve of being plunged—the other rebuked him for his conduct. “But the other,” it is said, “answering rebuked him, saying, Dost

not thou fear God, seeing that thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.”

These are remarkable words. They show in the most conclusive manner, that he who spoke them had clear perceptions and profound impressions of his personal guilt in the sight of God. “Dost not thou fear God?” he said to his partner in sin. That shewed that he had by the secret, but Almighty power of the Holy Spirit, imparted to him while on the cross, been led to see his sin against God. In accordance with this rebuke to the impenitent thief, the other said, “We indeed justly,”—that is, we are indeed deserving of the condemnation in which we are found. We merit death; “we receive the due reward of our deeds.” Here is proof that this one of the two thieves saw and sorrowed for his sins. But that would not have sufficed. More is necessary to conversion than a mere sense of guilt. With that there must always be blended faith in the Saviour. The thief had this faith. He believed in Christ, as was con-

clusively shown by his prayer to Jesus, that He might remember him when He came into His kingdom. Jesus heard his prayer, as He ever does the prayer of faith, in reference to spiritual blessings. "This day," said our Lord, "wilt thou be with me in paradise."

And so with regard to the three thousand who were converted under Peter's preaching, on the day of Pentecost. Sudden as was their conversion to Christ, we have the clearest testimony to the fact, that strong convictions of sin preceded that conversion. The apostle had unfolded to them their guilt before God, with a fidelity to which their consciences rendered a ready response, and with a power which they could not resist. "They were," we are told, "pricked to their hearts" by the preaching of Peter. The conviction which he brought home to their minds was so strong, that under its influence they were constrained to cry out, addressing themselves to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" They were directed, under these powerful and painful convictions of sin, to the Lord Jesus Christ, and urged to save themselves, by means of faith in Him, "from this untoward

generation.” About three thousand of their number listened to the words of Peter. They obeyed his exhortation, and were saved from the perdition which must else have been inevitably their eternal doom.

Not less have we reason to believe that another remarkable case of sudden conversion, recorded in Scripture, was also characterized by previous powerful convictions of sin. I refer to the case of the Philippian jailor. It will be observed in reading the narrative of this remarkable conversion, as given in the sixteenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, that though the consternation which was first excited in the Philippian jailor’s bosom, may have been caused by the apprehension that his prisoners had escaped, and that he, in consequence, would be severely punished by the authorities, yet that, when he is described as having come trembling, and falling down before the apostles’ feet, earnestly asking what he must do to be saved,—it was after he had been assured by Paul, and satisfied by certain proof that they were all safe, that he so trembled and fell down before the apostles’ feet. Nothing, therefore, could be more clear, than that, exceedingly sud-

den as was this conversion, it was preceded by powerful convictions of sin. The very fact, indeed, of a sinner earnestly supplicating God's converting grace, necessarily presupposes a consciousness of guilt; and the strength of a sinner's conviction of his sin, may safely be inferred from the fervency with which he implores forgiveness. There was a terrible earnestness in the jailor's question, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" That could only have arisen from the depth of his convictions,—a fact which shows how God can, by His Holy Spirit, in one single moment cause a ray of light from heaven to flash in on the sinner's soul, and instantaneously illumine his whole inner man, in such a manner, as that He shall in a moment bring all the sinner's past guilt, in the greatness of its enormity, into contact with his newly-acquired spiritual vision. The jailor was directed to Christ: he was urged to believe in Jesus; he did believe, and was instantaneously saved with an everlasting salvation.

The Holy Spirit, in operating on the minds of the unconverted, has no fixed rule for His guidance, either as regards the manner of His

operations or the strength of the convictions which He produces. While we have seen that conversion to God following on conviction of sin, is in the case of many sinners sudden, in others it is gradual. Numbers of persons have laboured under convictions of their guilt, more or less strong, for weeks, and months, and even years. I doubt not that many of my readers will be able to speak from their own experience to this point. They will testify to the truth of the statement, from what they themselves have experienced. In the great majority of cases it will, I believe, be found, that those whose convictions have thus extended over a period of time, of considerable duration, are persons who have been brought up in regular attendance on the means of grace. Usually, the Word does not come to them in the same overpowering manner as it does to those who have been living in the neglect of those means of grace. The former have been accustomed to read and to hear the same truths for years—it may be a long series of years—and therefore those truths do not come home to their minds with the same novelty as they do to the minds of those whose eyes and ears are comparative strangers to them.

Those convictions which are suddenly produced by the operation of the Holy Spirit on the mind of the sinner, are usually more powerful than those which are gradual. This, too is in accordance with what we have stated respecting the novelty or freshness with which Divine truth is presented to the minds of those who have been neglectful of the means of grace, compared with those who have been habitually attentive, in an external sense, in the use of those means. While on the minds of some, convictions are wrought by the Spirit through the instrumentality of the still small voice, in other cases they come with an overpowering force. The roar of Sinai's thunder is so loud and terrible, that the sound is almost more than they can bear. Not only do they "exceedingly fear," but physically as well as mentally they "exceedingly quake." The Spirit of God in many instances places their sins in all their terrible aggravations, with such vividness and power before their mental vision, that they stand appalled at the sight. It is a sight too dreadful to behold. Many have been driven by it to the very verge of despair. Their convictions of the magnitude of their guilt have been so profound,

that for days and nights together they have been unable to shut their eyes in sleep. Theirs has been a life, for a season, of intense and unceasing agony. Their sins, in all their frightful enormity, have never, during all that time, been for one single moment absent from their mind. Nothing, until the Holy Spirit did it, could diminish in the slightest degree the intensity of their mental sufferings. All the splendours of earth, all the wealth of the world, all the honours ever possessed by man, even were they concentrated into one, could not procure them a moment's repose. I know I am speaking to some who have passed through such periods of terrible convictions, because it were not possible to address any great number of Christians who have not known what this awful agony of the soul is. Some of those whom I so address, may have, in its overpowering intensity, felt, as has just been remarked, their whole frames tremble, and the very bed shake beneath them. They may know what it is to be in a frightful physical, as well as moral, fever. Many have felt alternately the cold perspiration dropping down their cheeks, and an intolerable sensation of pain seated in the region of their

burning brow. To those whose convictions have been less powerful, this may appear an exaggerated picture. Let such persons only converse with those who have passed through the fiery trial, and it will be found to fall far short of the reality, instead of exceeding it. Or if there be some whose eye is at this time tracing these pages, who may feel a diffidence in conversing with their fellow-Christians who have been the subjects of these agonizing convictions of sin, let them read the experiences of such men as John Bunyan and John Newton, as recorded in their autobiographies, and they will no longer doubt the reality or the intolerable power of such convictions. Spiritually and mentally such persons have been like the man among the tombs. Their very souls have been, as it were, torn to pieces; and, like him, they have sought rest, but found none. At last, in the fulness of God's good time for interposing on their behalf, the Holy Spirit has come to their relief. He has directed them to the cross of Christ, and brought their hearts and consciences into contact with Jesus' blood,—that blood which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel. They have first found for-

givenness beneath the droppings of the Redeemer's blood, and a sense of pardon has been followed by a sense of peace. Such persons know, in the inexpressible blessedness of their own experience, what regeneration or conversion means ; and there is not one among the number who will not ascribe the glorious and gracious change solely to the operation of the Almighty power of the Holy Spirit. It is a great and remarkable fact, that were it possible to bring all the believers on earth together, and ask them by what agency they had undergone the great change, they would with one heart and one voice, and one grand chorus of praise and thanksgiving to God, ascribe it exclusively to the convincing and converting power of the Holy Ghost. They do so in their hearts every day of their lives, and they often and audibly express their sense of the fact, when on their bended knees before God. And so it will be in glory,—even, indeed, more emphatically so in glory, inasmuch as their views will be more vivid, and their impressions more powerful, in heaven than on earth. There will be in the realms of bliss above, such perceptions of the glory of the Holy Spirit's person, and of the graciousness of His

work on the soul of the sinner, when on earth, as cannot now enter into the heart of man to conceive.

But in speaking of the convictions of sin which the unconverted experience, it is very important to make a distinction between that which is the fruit of the Spirit's operations on the mind and heart, and that which is merely the result of nature. Nature often so closely resembles grace, in the convictions of guilt which the sinner feels, that it is sometimes exceedingly difficult to distinguish between the two. Nature frequently goes remarkable lengths in presenting the sinner's guilt to his mind, in awakening his conscience, and filling his heart with fear. I have read—and so must many, if not all, of those who are following me through these pages—of men whose convictions of sin have been so powerful, that they have in some cases fancied they actually saw the burning pit beneath their feet, yawning to receive them. They have seen a frown on the face of God, which might have been enough to consume a universe. Others have felt even more than this. They have imagined themselves to be already in the regions of the lost,—torn to pieces

by the gnawings of the worm which shall never die, and enveloped in the flames of the fire which shall never be quenched. They have been haunted by the idea that they saw the demoniacal exultation of the fiends below, as they secured and held them fast in those horrible clutches whence they were never to be released. Such has been the terrific experience of myriads of sinners who have never been converted, because their consternation was caused by their natural consciences alone,—the Holy Spirit having had no part whatever in the feelings so produced. That many such cases of awful convictions of sin, without being followed by conversion, do occur, is placed beyond all doubt. We all know what a scene of horror the death-bed of Voltaire presented. So terrible was it that the nurse who attended him said she would not be present at the death of another infidel for all the world could give her. Francis Freeport, too, was another illustration of the same truth, that there may be most powerful convictions of sin, without the accompaniment of conversion. He expired exclaiming, while the perspiration gushed out in copious quantities from the pores

of his body, as he lay on his dying bed,—that he already felt the flames of hell in all their terrible fury. These are but two out of innumerable cases of a substantially similar kind, in which we know that the convictions of sin which caused such intense agony of soul, did not issue in conversion, and were but the work of nature alone.

Both the Old and New Testaments contain illustrations of the same truth. I must content myself with one from each book. In the Old Testament I refer to the case of Cain. We all know the depth of his convictions of the magnitude of his guilt, and the terror which in consequence seized upon his soul and kept possession of it. Yet we are no less certain that that was not the work of the Holy Spirit, and that it ended not in conversion as the prelude to salvation. The New Testament case will occur to every mind : so intolerable was the state of mind caused by the convictions of sin which Judas felt, that he was impelled to seek a refuge from it in a suicide's grave. But there was nothing of the work of the Spirit in the views of his guilt which he had, or in the intense agony which he endured.

But the question recurs, How shall we distin-

guish between that which is the work of nature only, and that which is the result of the agency of the Holy Spirit? So striking is the resemblance in the experience of some persons, that even the most eminent Christians who may be consulted by those who are the subject of convictions of sin, cannot express any decided opinion as to whether they are the fruit of the Holy Spirit's operations or only the work of nature. I might go further still. I know, and I doubt not many of my readers are also personally acquainted with, instances in which the resemblance was so close to the work of the Holy Spirit, of that which the event proved to have been only the result of the natural conscience being awakened, that for a season, and it may be for a somewhat prolonged season, no doubt whatever was entertained that the Divine Spirit had put forth His almighty power in the convictions of sin so produced.

And yet, though it be sometimes so exceedingly difficult to distinguish between what is the work of the Spirit, and that which is the work of nature only, in that process of conviction of sin which every saved sinner must, more or less, sensibly go through, there are certain tests by which, in most

cases, we may arrive at right conclusions on so infinitely momentous a subject.

Those convictions which have a special connection with a mere dread of punishment, as the consequence of guilt, are not the work of the Holy Spirit. I do not say that convictions of sin, which have had their origin in paroxysms of alarm, springing from a fear of punishment, may not issue in convictions, which will end in the conversion of the soul to God. The Holy Ghost may, speaking after the manner of men, take advantage of that which nature hath wrought, and make it the means of the sinner's regeneration. But, while I make this admission, I am earnestly desirous of impressing this great truth on the minds of those into whose hands this work may come—that, so long as one's convictions of sin, and the sorrow which arises therefrom, do not go beyond the apprehension of future punishment, there is no reason to conclude that the Spirit of God has had anything whatever to do in the production of such convictions. My views on this point will receive a striking illustration from a consideration of those convictions of sin which are so often brought home to the mind of the

sinner, when he is impressed with the belief that some serious illness will end in death. How often is the deepest alarm felt and expressed in cases of this kind, and resolutions made of future amendment, should God restore the parties to health, which, when they are so restored, are proved to have been merely the results of an awakened conscience, with which the agency of the Spirit of God has had no concern whatever. This is proved by the parties returning, as the Scriptures say, to folly as soon they are raised from their beds of sickness.

In accordance with this view, I believe that a very great majority of cases which are called death-bed conversions, are no conversions at all. I do not say that in no case are those convictions of sin, which are produced on a dying bed, the fruit of the Holy Spirit's operations, and consequently issue in the sinner's conversion and salvation : but I do from my inmost soul affirm—and I speak thus earnestly because what I say may prove a word of warning to some of my readers against delaying repentance and conversion till the approach of the closing scene—I do affirm, with all the emphasis I can give to my words, that a death-bed repent-

ance, needing not to be repented of, and accompanied by the salvation of the sinner, is a matter of comparatively rare occurrence.

I believe that one of the main and most manifest characteristics of those convictions of sin which are of the operation of the Spirit of God is, that he who is the subject of them has profound impressions of the greatness of his guilt, as committed against God. Let me not be understood as saying that the sinner labouring under profound convictions of sin produced by the Holy Spirit, has no dread of God's displeasure in the form of future punishment. That would be to suppose human nature has ceased to be human nature. The Holy Spirit deals with us in accordance with the constitution of our being, but, then, wherever the work of conviction is His, He reveals to the person who is the subject of His convictions, the greatness of his guilt, as being committed against a Being so holy, so righteous, and so good as God is. The sinner is led to see and to feel, that God has the strongest, even infinite, claims on his habitual love, homage, and obedience; and that in disregarding those claims he has done what was most unrighteous, most disobedient,

most ungrateful. His language is that of David, after his great transgression, "Against thee and thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." He is wounded to the quick to think that he should have sinned against so holy, and righteous, and beneficent a Being,—against infinite love to the sinner, and against infinite moral worth. Though, as just remarked, he is not uninfluenced in the distress of mind which he feels, by the fear of future punishment, his prevailing source of sorrow is the consciousness that he has returned the grossest ingratitude to God for so much kindness, and been utterly forgetful of God's many mercies,—or that if they should be at all occasionally remembered, it should be so coldly, so inadequately, so transiently.

By these tests, accompanied with earnest and persevering prayer to God, those persons whose minds are the subject of strong convictions of sin, may in most cases be able to arrive at a right conclusion, as to whether or not their distress of mind is the fruit of the operation of the Holy Spirit, or the result of the workings of the natural conscience only. But it may be in the case of some of my readers, as it is and has been in the

case of others, that the only satisfactory way of deciding the question, will be by the visible effects produced, in other words, by either a thorough unmistakeable change, occurring in the heart and life, or by a return to the party's previous courses, and the extinction of all those powerful and alarming convictions which formerly had caused such inexpressible misery. On the point of what constitutes real conversion to God, as the issue of convictions of sin taught by the Holy Spirit, I shall have occasion hereafter to speak.

In the meantime let me direct attention to the agency by which the Holy Spirit convinces and converts the soul of the sinner. The Spirit of God, in carrying on the work of conviction, preparatory to conversion in the heart of the unregenerate sinner, invariably does so by means of the Word of God, either as that Word is read in the Bible, or substantially in some other religious work, or listened to from the pulpit, or from some other place whence it is expounded or enforced. Hence, the Word of God is called the sword of the Spirit. There is no instance on record in which any sinner has been converted through any other instrumentality than the truth, as contained

in the Scriptures. God does not, in that sense, work miracles. He never did. Every case of conversion recorded in the Old or New Testament was wrought by the Holy Spirit acting on the mind and heart, through means of the truth. Before they were written Scriptures, God often appeared to men in visions, and savingly impressed their minds; but even, then, it was by special revelations of the same Divine truths as those which constitute the Bible, that he accomplished His purposes of mercy. He enlightened their minds by the Spirit respecting His own character, and their guilt and responsibility. The same Holy Spirit made the light which was thus poured into their souls, the instrumentality by which He accomplished the moral transformation of their characters. In after-ages, when several books of the inspired volume had been committed to writing, the Holy Spirit invariably made use of the written Word in convincing and converting the guilty. "The law of the Lord," says the Psalmist, "is perfect, converting the soul." All that we read before and after this in the book of the Old Testament bears out our proposition, that in convincing and converting the sinner, the Holy Ghost operates on

the mind and heart by means of the revealed truth alone. No one ever heard of a single soul being converted where there did not exist the intellectual knowledge of Divine revelation. No instance, in the history of the world, can be adduced, in which that thorough transformation of character has occurred, which we call conversion, in heathen lands or in our own country, where the mind of the party so changed had not previously, in some way or other, been brought into contact with the written word of God. A conversion may take place in the remotest regions of heathenism, but then it will invariably be found that, at some time or other, the person who is the subject of it has had a mental knowledge of the Gospel. Twenty years or more may have elapsed since a man or woman had read a verse of the Bible, or attended the means of grace in any form whatever, and that man or woman may be convinced of sin by the Spirit, and through him, by grace, be converted; but still it will be found no less true, as in ordinary cases of conviction of sin and conversion to Christ, that the Holy Ghost has accomplished the change through the instrumentality of the truth. Particular passages of Scrip-

ture, or it may be one single verse, have been brought so vividly before the mind, and charged home so powerfully on the conscience, at a particular moment, though never once thought of for twenty or thirty years,—as to accomplish the saving change alike suddenly and unresistingly on the part of the sinner. For any one, therefore, to expect conversion—if such cases there can be—without using the means of grace which God has provided, is presumption of the most fearful and criminal kind. God, in His great mercy, has appointed the reading of His Word, the reading of religious books, written in accordance with His Word, and illustrative of it, together with the preaching of the Gospel, and intercourse with Christian friends, as the grand instrumentalities which He employs—and crowns, by His Spirit, with success—in convincing sinners of their guilt and responsibility, and conducting them to the cross of Christ. All, therefore, who may be seeking to be saved, must submit to the mode by which God accomplishes His gracious purposes to mankind; and any one seeking salvation in any other way, or neglecting the means which God has provided for the rescue of those who else must perish

for ever, will thereby greatly aggravate his own guilt, and awfully increase the danger of his not being saved at all. And so when you, my Christian friends, who have yourselves experienced the transforming power of the Holy Spirit in your own hearts, fervently desire the salvation of others, be sure that you press upon them with all the earnestness of which your minds are susceptible, the great duty of diligently and systematically using those means of grace which the Holy Spirit has, in all ages, owned and blessed, and without the use of which there can be no ground whatever to expect the Spirit's agency and resistless power. Above all, those who are themselves seeking the salvation of their own souls, and those, no less, who may be deeply concerned for the salvation of friends or acquaintances, must especially look to the Word of God as the grand means by which that conviction which ends in conversion, is to be produced. It is at once natural and fitting it should be so. The Bible is an emanation from the Holy Spirit. It is the product of that Divine agent's work. "All Scripture," we are told, "is given by inspiration"—the inspiration of the Spirit of God. "And holy men of old," it is

elsewhere said, "spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." Hence, the Bible is called the inspired volume. And if the Holy Spirit has dictated every word which that blessed book contains, it is surely right and reasonable that the revelation of Divine truth which is therein made, should be the grand direct means which He employs for the conviction and conversion of the sinner, as well as for the sanctification of those who have undergone the great spiritual change.

In accordance with this view of the instrumentality which the Holy Spirit employs in savingly dealing with the hearts and consciences of the unconverted, is the emphatic declaration of Paul, that the word of God is the sword of the Spirit. By its instrumentality the soul of the sinner is deeply wounded. It is almost, if one might use the expression, cut asunder. The holy oracles hold up the sinner's guilt in such terrible colours, that he feels like one whose very heart is pierced in its most vital parts. But it is a blessed thought, it is a sweet assurance, that the Holy Spirit never wounds but to heal. I do not say that sinners are never thrown into a state of frightful alarm, as the result of deep convictions

of sin, and fearful forebodings as to the punishment which will be inflicted on them in consequence of their guilt. Such instances, as before observed, are of very frequent occurrence. There is not a single reader of this volume who has not, as before observed, either experienced something of this kind in his own soul, or seen or known it as the experience of others. Myriads of persons have lived for long periods in a state of consternation, which no language could describe, arising from their awfully poignant convictions of sin; and thousands, in the extremity of their distress, have been driven to despair, and then sought a refuge, from their intolerable sorrows, in the suicide's grave. But that was not the work of the Holy Spirit. It was merely the operations of an awakened conscience, produced either by some solemn dispensation of Divine Providence, or by the terrors of God's violated law. All this may be done by nature, without the Holy Spirit having anything whatever to do with it. But on this aspect of my subject I forbear to dwell in this part of the volume, as I shall afterwards have occasion to recur to it.

The preaching of the Gospel, when the Gospel

message is proclaimed with fidelity, earnestness, and affection, is one of the means which the Holy Spirit especially owns and blesses for the conviction and conversion of the sinner; and so it has been ever since the first days of Christianity. There is something peculiarly effectual, under the Holy Ghost, in the delivery of the message of mercy by the living voice of one who has especially consecrated himself to the service of God in the preaching of the Gospel. And so, we doubt not, it will be until the whole world has been brought under the regenerating power of the Christian scheme. Pulpit ministrations, as well as the reading of evangelical books, are but modifications of the usual manner in which the Word of God is brought to bear on the sinner's mind, and conscience, and heart. The Holy Scriptures, therefore, as we have sought to show, are the invariable means which the Spirit employs for the conviction and conversion of the fallen race of Adam. God, in this way, signally honours His own Word. Without its application to the mind and heart of the guilty, the Holy Spirit will never be found to be in the course of operating a saving change. That is the Spirit's

great agency, and therefore, in seeking the conviction and conversion of sinners, the saints of God ought never for a moment to overlook the instrumentality which the Holy Spirit thus especially delights to honour and to bless.

But, in dwelling on this phase of Divine truth, let us never forget, that though the Holy Spirit never works by any other instrumentality than God's Holy Word, that Word would be wholly ineffectual without the accompanying aid of the Holy Spirit. You may else rise up early, and sit up late, reading carefully your Bible, and no book besides, and yet remain, till an advanced age, just the same unconvinced and unconverted person you ever were. Let us dwell at some length on this aspect of our subject. As the written Word is the grand instrument by which the Holy Spirit operates in producing those convictions of sin which result in the regeneration of the sinner, let us say again, that, on the other hand, the Word of God will never of itself convert a single soul. It never has done so; in the nature of things it cannot do so. It possesses no inherent power; its energy and effect spring from the circumstance of its being accompanied by the

Holy Spirit. Without the Spirit's accompanying influences it will make no more impression for good, on the sinner's heart, than the impalpable and unfelt air. So far from being beneficial in itself, it has the very opposite effect, it has a hardening tendency. "The letter," we are told, "killeth;" it is the Spirit alone that giveth life. The mere unaided Word deadens; it is the Spirit that quickens. You may not only read the Scriptures from morning till night, but read them with so much attention as that you shall be able to commit whole chapters to memory, and yet you will not have the slightest softening of your hearts—no consciousness of your turning to God. The Spirit alone can render the Word effectual. All that the Scriptures, unaccompanied by the influence of the Holy Ghost, can do, is to impart knowledge to the mind. They can give head knowledge, but beyond that they can do nothing to benefit the sinner. But when the Holy Spirit accompanies the written Word, the sinner's convictions invariably conduct him to Christ. He is carried away in triumph, a willing captive, as will hereafter be shown, to the cross. He believes in Jesus through the operation of the Holy Spirit, and the process of regeneration is accomplished.

There is much matter for admonition in all this. I may be addressing some at this moment who may have convictions of sin, and may be inquiring the way of salvation, and who may, as one proof of their anxiety to be saved, have been for years regular, and even attentive, readers of the Bible; and yet they cannot say that they are conscious that what they have read has produced the slightest impression of a renovating nature in their hearts. Wherever such cases are to be met with, this conclusion may be come to, with a certainty that it is the right one,—they have not earnestly and systematically sought the influences of the Holy Spirit to accompany their perusal of God's Word. They have read the Bible just as if it contained an innate power to accomplish a saving change in the mind and heart. Any one may thus read on till the end of the world, were it within the scope of God's providential arrangements that any individual could live so long, without a single step being taken all the time towards that new birth without which no one can see the kingdom of God.

The practical inference to be deduced from all this is, that those to whom these observations

apply should, from this hour, begin to seek in earnest the accompanying influences of the Holy Spirit, on every occasion in which the Scriptures are taken up for the purpose of being perused. Implore of God that he would abundantly bestow upon you the gift of His Holy Spirit in all His enlightening, quickening, and converting influences ; and if this be done in fervent and habitual prayer, at the same time looking up to God in the confident expectancy of faith, ultimate conversion, through the instrumentality of God's Word, may be regarded as an event as certain as if it had already occurred.

The same observations apply with equal force with regard to providences, which may often be called a collateral means of grace. Though God's providential dealings, however solemn their character, and whatever may be the frequency with which they occur, can never of themselves issue in the conversion of a sinner, yet they are frequently blessed as a preliminary step towards the salvation of the soul, by predisposing the mind to apprehend, and the heart to receive, the truth as it is in Jesus. But even then the Holy Spirit must be the great agent in the work. He directs the

mind of the sinner to those views unfolded in the Word of God, which are most adapted to convince and convert. Without His agency, a series of the most solemn providential visitations which ever befel a descendant of Adam will make no salutary impression whatever. You may lose in rapid succession, until not one shall be left, the most loved friends you ever had on earth; you may, in addition, be stripped of all your property, and, to crown all your calamities, you may be deprived of health, and made the subject of such an accumulation of sorrows and sufferings as never before fell to the lot of any human being; and yet your heart may remain wholly unaffected. Matters may be even worse than this; instead of your heart being softened, it may be hardened. And this, let me remark, is almost invariably the consequence of afflictive dispensations of Providence, where those dispensations are not accompanied by the applying power of the Holy Spirit. What was Pharaoh's case—though not so visibly to the public eye, because few are in his prominent state—when one overwhelming judgment had followed so hard on the heels of another—is more or less the case of all unconverted persons with whom

the Spirit of God has not begun His saving operations. The heart of the Egyptian monarch only grew harder and harder as every successive and increasingly heavy judgment from heaven fell upon him. It is only as the Spirit of God accompanies the heavy strokes of His providence, that the minds and hearts of those who are the subjects of them, are prepared to receive that revealed truth by which alone the Holy Ghost convinces and converts the sinner.

And so it is with regard to all the other means of grace, of whatever kind. You may be regular in your attendance at the public worship of God ; you may be in the habit of reading religious books, and meeting much with the saints ; you may even be regular, morning and evening, in offering up prayers in the seclusion of your closets to God—for many myriads of persons living in Christian countries, do, after a fashion, statedly engage in prayer—but all, all will be of no avail whatever, if the Holy Spirit's influences are not experienced. You may, every Lord's day, listen attentively, in the sanctuary, not only to the most eloquent discourses, but to the most solemn and searching sermons that ever were addressed to the

consciences of sinners, and yet no impressions of a salutary kind will be produced on your minds, nor your hearts be in the slightest measure affected. I will go still further than this. I will suppose it possible for God to commission the most exalted and most mighty of all those glorious beings—beings that excel in intellect and in strength—who constitute the hierarchy of heaven, to visit our world for the purpose of reclaiming some lapsed sinner, and rescuing him from the ruin which otherwise will be his inevitable and eternal doom; and I will suppose this greatest and loftiest of all the angelic host—the archangel who sits in closest proximity to the throne of glory—to come and preach the Gospel to some particular sinner,—and yet this celestial messenger, this great, and good, and glorious being, will not, without the accompanying aids of the Holy Spirit, make any more impression, of a saving kind, than the gently-descending dew makes on the adamantine rock on which it imperceptibly distils. It is the Holy Spirit alone that can render *any* means effectual for convincing and converting the sinner. There is no other power either in earth or in heaven—I say it with all

reverence—that can savingly convince the sinner,—that can renew the human heart,—that can regenerate depraved nature,—that can rescue man from the eternal ruin to which his guilt has doomed him. “Not by might, not by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord.”

Striking as may be this illustration of the inadequacy of any agency short of that of the Holy Spirit to convert the soul of the sinner, there is one which is even more striking still. I allude to the fact so clearly established, so amply made manifest in the New Testament, that even Jesus himself often sought the salvation of sinners, without effect, during the period of his public ministry on earth. As the Son of God in human form, He was clothed with a majesty and authority which no angel ever possessed. He spake as never man spake, and yet His message of mercy often fell listlessly on the ears of those to whom it was addressed. In innumerable instances it attracted attention only to be rejected with scorn and indignation. How few comparatively of the Jewish nation, His brethren according to the flesh, received either Himself or His message. Was it not true of them as a people, that “He came unto

his own, and his own received him not ?” Did He not shed tears over the inhabitants of guilty Jerusalem because they would not listen to His accents of compassion and love when travailing in intense anxiety of desire to save their souls? And yet we have no evidence that even the tears of Jesus, so profusely shed over the people of that guilty and impenitent city, touched the hearts of any one of their number. Instead of receiving His message, and cordially welcoming Himself, the Jews often sought to take His life in return for the zeal which He displayed in His efforts to save their souls. The same inveterate hardness of heart, and the same scornful rejection of the salvation which He came to press on the acceptance of sinners, were displayed in the very last scene, and at the very last moment of His life. One of the two thieves who were put to death with Him, joined the infuriated crowd around the cross, who with wicked hands crucified and slew Him, in those epithets expressive of scorn and hatred which were so lavishly heaped upon Him. And what, let us ask, could more solemnly or strikingly prove the inadequacy of any power short of that of the Divine Spirit to regenerate the heart of the sinner, than that even Jesus

himself, notwithstanding all the majesty with which his nature and character were clothed, should not, in virtue of His words of heavenly wisdom, and the spotless purity of His conduct, have accomplished the conviction of a single sinner, unless His message of mercy was accompanied by the power of the Holy Ghost? There was an authority in the utterances of Jesus which could cause those whom he addressed to fall down as dead men before Him; but we do not read of those who so fell prostrate on the earth at the voice of Christ, believing on Him and being saved. Neither in the message itself, nor in the accents of His voice, nor in the majesty of His manner, was there the requisite power to convert the soul of a single sinner of all who ever heard and saw our Lord in the days of His flesh. It was only when the Spirit of God brought home to the consciences and hearts of those to whom He preached the Gospel message, that that message was made effectual for their salvation. The winds and the waves were obedient to the voice of Jesus, but the hearts of men were not, except in those individual cases in which there was a special putting forth of the power of the Holy Spirit.

But though there be so intense an inveteracy in the resistance which the human heart offers to every effort made to conquer it, that all the intellectual and moral power of angels and of men, were it concentrated into one grand agency, would not achieve the victory, the Holy Spirit, by the display of His power, can successfully, and even instantaneously, accomplish the change. There is no heart so desperate as not to be reached by the agency of the Holy Ghost. There never yet was a human being, and never will be, beyond the compass of the Spirit's power. The most desperately wicked heart is conquered by His agency. The proudest spirit is brought down to the dust by His Almighty power. The most stubborn will yield under His softening and subduing influences. And he who was even ferocious in the intensity of his wickedness, becomes the mildest, and meekest, and most amiable of men, when the agency of the Holy Spirit is brought to bear on his mind and heart. What a remarkable illustration of the power of the Spirit in the regeneration and subsequent transformation of character, was given in the case of Manasseh ! No less remarkable, though in a different way, because dealing with

a man whose wickedness had assumed a different type, was the exhibition of the Holy Spirit's resistless power in the conversion of Saul of Tarsus.

At this part of our subject it is of the most vital importance that we should have clear and Scriptural views of what constitutes the work of the Holy Spirit in conversion. I have, in a previous part of the chapter, sought to distinguish between those convictions of sin which are merely the result of an awakened conscience, and those which are the fruit of the operation of the Spirit of God; and I have remarked that the resemblance between nature and grace—between an awakened conscience and the work of the Holy Ghost—is sometimes so close, that it can only be ascertained to which agency the convictions are to be ascribed, by their ultimate results. But even with regard to the sinner's conversion, there is sometimes a difficulty in speaking confidently. We read in the Scriptures of some who had made a profession of religion, and doubtless were regarded as Christians, of whom an apostle could say with sorrow in his heart, and tears in his eyes, "For many walk of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the

enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction." In the New Testament, not to refer to the Old, there are many instances recorded of persons who had occupied a high place among the disciples of Jesus, who afterwards, by their final and entire abandonment of even the very profession of Christianity, were proved not to have been regenerated persons. Judas was one remarkable instance of this. It is doubtful whether any of the apostles of our Lord made a fairer profession of faith in Jesus, love to Him, and devotion to His cause, than he of whom we afterwards read as being "the son of perdition." The very fact of his having been made a sort of treasurer of the tilled ground that belonged to the twelve, justifies the inference that he stood high among the other apostles. Of this we are certain, that he was not suspected of anything wrong: for when Jesus, immediately before the closing scene of His earthly existence, was at supper with His apostles, and said that one of them would betray Him into the hands of His enemies, not one fixed on Judas as the man. The fact of each asking their Lord whether it was he, showed that their suspicions had not lighted on any particular one. Yet the

awful result proved that notwithstanding his exemplary walk and conversation, even in the eyes of those who were his constant companions in the apostleship, and who having themselves been regenerated, might have been supposed to be better able to judge as to who were, and who were not, born again. Judas had never experienced in his heart the transforming power of the Holy Spirit.

The same may be said of Demas: "Demas has forsaken us, having loved the world." That love of the world, as a ruling passion and reigning power, had never been extinguished in his breast. It had been controlled: it had been so far kept in subjection, that probably the other disciples, who were most intimate with him, had never discerned its existence. But still it did exist. It only slumbered: it was not put out. The Spirit of God had not wrought in Demas deliverance from the terrible despotism of the world's love. At last the latent passion burst forth. It asserted its supremacy, and Demas forsook the Saviour, and returned to a world which in his heart he had never abandoned.

No less true was all this of the five foolish virgins. The touching and instructive narrative

justifies the inference, that their profession of religion was as great as that of the five wise virgins: nor can there be a doubt that they were regarded by those of the people of the world with whom they came into intimate contact, as being no less excellent Christians than their five wise companions. We see, indeed, nothing to lead us to doubt that they were even regarded by the wise virgins as being no less converted persons than themselves. Nor is it likely that the unregeneracy or gracelessness of the foolish virgins was discovered, until the terrible intimation was made, that the door was shut against them. All seemed fair and promising till then, to the five wise virgins, as well as to those who were not Christians. It is even most probable—it might almost be said quite certain—that they never, themselves, for one moment doubted their own religion. It was only when they found that their lamps had gone out, and the door was shut, that the frightful delusion which they had practised on themselves, and on others, was dispelled.

And so it was with regard to those of whom the Apostle John speaks, when he says: “They went out from us, but they were not of us, for if

they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us." It was only after they had apostatised, that it was seen by the followers of Jesus, with whom they daily and hourly associated, that the root of the matter was not in them,—that the Holy Spirit had not wrought a saving change in their hearts.

There is a danger of mistaking for conversion, the mere fact of feeling a pleasure in listening to divine truth and experiencing some reformation of conduct. Without these two experiences there can be no real regeneration of the heart; but they may, and often do, exist without any saving change having been wrought in the soul by the power of the Holy Spirit. Herod heard the word gladly, as preached by John, and "did many things." No doubt he was for a time looked upon by some of those with whom he associated as a converted person. Yet we all know the issue; he who had but a short time before heard John gladly, not only cast him into the prison, but cut off his head to gratify the wishes of a young damsel by whose dancing he had been greatly captivated. There is another similar example in

Scripture of the joy with which persons may receive the truth, and of the reformation which may accompany the mere mental reception of revealed truth, without any real change of heart having taken place. Many of my readers will, I doubt not, anticipate the case to which I allude. They will point at once to the striking illustration given in the parable of the sower. The stony-ground hearers listened to the word, and "anon with joy received it." And not only so, but there were, we are told, all the external symptoms of a saving and sanctifying impression having been produced by the word to which they had thus listened with delight, and received with joy. They had "endured for a while." Their time is not indicated, but we have every reason to believe, that so long as it lasted they presented to the eye of the world, and, in all probability, to that of Christians too, evidences of conversion, which left no misgiving in the minds of those who knew them, that they were regenerated persons. They endured, we are told, until the time of persecution came. If the time of persecution had never come, it is more than probable, that the fact of their not having been con-

verted at all, might never have been suspected, much less clearly ascertained. But the time of persecution having come, it was found that they had no root in them. They had no grace in their hearts. They had nothing which could enable them to withstand the tempest of persecution. They yielded to the storm. They were offended. They renounced even the profession of religion. They perished from the way.

These are examples of how far it is possible to go in an outward profession of religion, and yet be all the while strangers to the saving operations of the Holy Spirit. Such cases ought to produce a profound solemnity of soul, and lead to a rigid searching of heart, in every reader into whose hands these pages may, in God's good providence, come.

The question recurs, and recurs with vast additional force,—How are we to distinguish between that which constitutes a saving change, and that which is only a mere outward reformation,—between that which is the result of the operation of the Spirit of God, and that which is only the result of the agency of natural causes? Let me implore those whose attention may be

fixed on this most momentous part of our subject, to pray earnestly for the assistance and direction of the Holy Spirit, in the solemn inquiry in reference to their individual cases. And if they do, their prayers will be heard, and no fatal mistake be made in a matter of such vast,—even of infinite importance.

There are some general considerations which if thus preceded and accompanied by fervent prayer, and a humble desire to be led by the Holy Spirit into the truth, in reference to this all-important inquiry, may be of great use in conducting to right conclusions. First of all, the sinner, when truly converted to God, *is made a willing subject of the Spirit's converting power.* "Thy people," says David, "shall be willing in the day of thy power." They not only intellectually assent to those views of truth which the Holy Ghost makes effectual for their conversion, but they consent to the work of regeneration. Let me bespeak particular attention to this point, because I attach a very especial importance to it. There is no such thing, nor will there ever be, as a sinner converted against his will. At the first stages of the Spirit's operation in the way of con-

vincing him of his guilt, there may have been a decided, perhaps a desperate resistance to His agency ; but, before the work of conversion is completed, that desperate resistance is overcome. The Holy Spirit puts forth His irresistible power, and the sinner succumbs. He becomes willing that he should be saved. Nay, more, he wishes to be saved. The language of the gaoler of Philippi, if not uttered audibly, is the language of every sinner on the conclusion of the process of conversion, " What must I do to be saved ?" Coercion in the matter of conversion, is a thing unknown in God's Word. A converted sinner remaining hostile to conversion, would be a contradiction. The regenerated sinner commits many sins after he has undergone the great change. Like David, he has often to lament that iniquities prevail against him, and like Paul, to complain that he feels a law in his members bringing him into captivity to the law of sin ; but this is done against, not with his will. So far from acquiescing in or consenting to it, he deeply deplores that he should thus be exposed to temptations by which he is often overcome, and that he should be the subject of corruptions which

are too numerous and powerful to be able at all times successfully to resist. The man who has really undergone a saving change, abhors the very sin which he frequently finds himself too feeble to avoid; and he loves that holiness after which he is conscious of often aspiring in vain. And here let me remark, that I know of no part of revealed truth which is more calculated than the greater portion of the seventh chapter of the Romans to enable any of my readers who, being doubtful as to their own conversion, are anxious to be able rightly to discriminate between what is the work of nature, and what the work of the Holy Spirit in reference to the regeneration of the soul. I would, with all affection and all earnestness, ask every doubting or distressed soul to read over the whole of that chapter, in order that those passages which more directly bear on the tests of conversion that are there given, may be seen in their connection. Let me here transfer to these pages that portion of the chapter which begins at the ninth verse, and goes on till the end. "For," says the apostle, "I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. And the commandment,

which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me. Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. Was then that which is good, made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful. For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do, I allow not; for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good, I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see ano-

ther law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am ; who shall deliver me from the body of this death ? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God ; but with the flesh the law of sin.”

There are various points in this portion of Scripture which are deserving of special attention. First of all, observe the consent as well as the assent to the principle, that God's law which condemns sin, and threatens the unpardoned sinner with a fearful punishment, is holy, just, and good. When the sinner has not only a clear apprehension of this great truth, but cordially concurs and rejoices in it, the circumstance may be regarded as an important collateral evidence that the agency of the Holy Spirit alone has brought him to view matters in that light. Observe, also, that the converted sinner can say with all sincerity of soul, when he is overcome by temptation from without, or by the assaults of corruption from within, that it is not he that commits the sin or does the wrong, but sin that

dwelleth within him. He has, it will be further remarked, a habitual and painful consciousness that in him, that is, in his flesh—in other words, in his nature—there dwelleth no good thing, no good thing as inherent in him, or produced by any efforts or resolutions of his own, after holiness. And it is a no less satisfactory evidence of the work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration having taken place, when a man is brought to say, and say with all sincerity, “I delight in the law of the Lord, after the inward man.” It has in all ages of the world been a remarkable feature in the experience of believers, that they delight in the holiness of God’s law, and by consequence in the holiness of God himself. In all the prayers, or nearly all, which are recorded for our instruction in Scripture, we find not only distinct recognitions of the perfect purity of the Divine character, but the expression of manifest and marked delight in the essential holiness of God. They rejoice in His purity as well as in His grace. This is especially observable in the man according to God’s own heart, and whose conversion, as shown by his love of holiness, stands out in such bold relief to nearly all the other Old Testament

saints of whom we read. The sanctity of the precept was inexpressibly dear to his heart. "Oh, how I love thy law," he breaks out in fervent exclamation in one of his addresses to God. And in another place we hear him emphatically, and with his whole soul, saying, "My heart breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy commandments." All, indeed, of those eminently spiritual songs of his, which have, in every subsequent age, been the language which believers have especially delighted to employ in their moments of closest communion with God, and their seasons of the most sensible enjoyment of the Divine favour,—all the Psalms of the sweet singer of Israel are more or less largely impregnated with this love of the sanctity of the precept as the transcript of the holy nature of a holy Jehovah. David loved that holiness, as all believers in the present day do, in their measure,—not merely because God himself had commanded him, saying, "Be ye holy, for I am holy," but because the Holy Spirit, by His operations on the Psalmist's heart, had so renewed his nature, that it became a sort of moral necessity to love and delight in the holiness of God's character. And no real

Christian in the present day would, when clothed and in his right mind, wish God to be otherwise than a perfectly pure and holy being. His conduct may not, and does not, always correspond with this feeling of his soul, but the feeling nevertheless exists. Every believer proves that he loves and rejoices in the holiness of God's character, by longing to be like Him in His perfect purity. The believer earnestly prays and labours to be raised, if we may so speak, to the level of God as a holy being,—though, as regards the essential character of God's holiness, we know that to be impossible, but no true Christian ever yet was found who wished that God might be brought down to his level. I feel deeply impressed with the conviction, that what I have here said may, in the hands of the Holy Spirit, be made eminently useful in leading the reader to a right conclusion as to whether or not he has undergone the great change.

I am probably not wrong in assuming that it was because David so much loved and delighted in the glorious holiness of God, and longed to be as like his Maker as is possible for a sinful creature, that he was called emphatically the “man

according to God's own heart." God must from His very nature especially love and take pleasure in those who most love the purity of His own character, and strive to be conformed more and more to the holiness of His being. The man who is conscious of this admiration of the holiness of God's character, and of this delight, after the inward man, in his pure and perfect law, has no ground whatever to doubt that he has been regenerated by the Holy Spirit.

In connection with this aspect of my subject, allow me to remark, that it is a most hopeful symptom when any one is conscious that the motive which operates most powerfully in his aspiring after greater attainments in holiness than the believer has yet reached, is not the fear of future punishment, *but the fear of displeasing God, should he fail to make progress in the Divine life.* In the earlier stages of the sinner's convictions of sin, the preponderating element is a dread of the penal consequences of his guilt. After conversion, a great and manifest change takes place in his experience. Though not entirely freed from the fear of future punishment—a wise and salutary provision of God's grace in dealing

with a nature which, though renewed, has still much of inherent corruption within it—yet the prevailing sentiment in the minds of converted persons, is a filial fear of thinking, or saying, or doing, that which would be displeasing or dishonourable to God. They would deeply deplore every departure from the Divine law, were no penalty whatever attached to it,—simply because such departure would be at variance with the nature, the will, and the ways of God. When any one feels that his paramount desire is thus to be conformed to the character and to be obedient to the commandments of God, simply because that will please and glorify God's great name, such person has the strongest possible reason for believing that he has experienced, on his mind and heart, the transforming power of the Holy Spirit.

It is, too, an evidence of such a kind as carries great weight with it, that the work of conversion by the Holy Ghost has passed on the sinner's soul, when he feels a fervent, irrepressible desire *to do something actively to promote the cause and advance the glory of God.* The natural and almost invariable language of the new-born soul is, "Lord,

what wilt thou have me to do?" The very moment that the sinner is thoroughly converted, he is earnestly desirous of consecrating himself to the service of God. Nor, indeed, could it be otherwise. With the vivid views, the overpowering convictions which he now has of the infinite and eternal obligations under which he has been laid to love and serve God, by such a display as he has seen of sovereign grace, it would be passing strange were the subject of this wondrous exhibition of unmerited mercy not to give a practical expression of the sense he entertains of the Divine favour thus so signally shewn to him. While convictions of sin are strong, and the sinner has no conception of having received forgiveness from God, the language is, "What must I do to be saved?" but when the Holy Spirit has not only wrought the work of conversion, but brought the blessed sense of it into the soul, the desire of the sinner so converted is, that he may, by active service, as well as by words, give expression to the gratitude which glows in his renewed bosom. There is no sacrifice to which he is not willing to submit where the glory of God is involved. That, at least, is the feeling of his mind; and if nature

will sometimes partially re-assert, for a brief season, her sway, yet he can lay his hand on his heart, and looking up to God, say : “Thou, Lord, knowest that it is my desire to manifest my love and gratitude to Thee, by serving Thee in true holiness of heart and of life.” If he knows that he does not unreservedly give himself up to God, he has the testimony of his conscience, that in all simplicity and sincerity he desires to do it. If he feels that there still remains so much of corruption within him, as to prevent a complete consecration of all his powers to the promotion of God’s cause in the world, he has the witness of the Spirit with his own spirit,—that it is his heart’s desire and prayer to God, that he may be enabled more and more to give himself up to the service of Him who hath saved him by the power of His Holy Spirit.

And wherever this feeling is the prevailing sentiment of the mind, and the habitual desire of the heart, he who is the happy subject of it, is furnished with evidence of the most conclusive kind, that he has undergone that great moral and spiritual transformation which is called, in the Christian’s vocabulary, being converted to God.

A disrelish not only for the confessed pleasures of sin, but for frivolous ways of spending one's time, is an evidence that the party has been regenerated by the Spirit of God,—not merely undergone some moral amelioration, which is simply the result of nature's agency on the mind. When the person is led, not reluctantly but willingly, to relinquish those sinful, and also those frivolous pursuits, which, though not necessarily in themselves sinful, lead to a waste of time and of the means of doing good,—there is strong presumptive evidence that the change is the fruit of the operation of that Holy Ghost. When he no longer feels pleasure in those occupations, or in that society in which his highest happiness, such as it was, formerly consisted—when he has lost all relish for them, and could not any longer take part in them, even were there no Divine prohibition against them,—simply because they have become utterly uncongenial to his tastes, and repugnant to his nature. This is a most hopeful symptom. It will very rarely be found that nature has done this. Nature, I know, may go great lengths in that direction; she may produce something resembling this change in one's tastes; but

I feel assured that wherever the change is so decided and so unmistakeable as I have indicated, it is the work of God's Holy Spirit, and therefore is to be regarded as a proof that he who has undergone the transformation, has passed from spiritual death into spiritual life.

A love, too, of *the means of grace and the ordinances of God's appointment*, with that habitual attendance on them which is prompted by the sense of great deprivation of enjoyment which would be felt were they neglected,—constitute evidences which are of no doubtful kind, that the Spirit of God has accomplished a work of conversion in the soul of him who is the subject of such experiences. I am aware that there is a modified or lower sense in which even the unregenerate man may take pleasure in attendance on the means of grace and the ordinances which God has appointed, and which He has in all ages of the world especially honoured and blessed as the channels through which He has been pleased to bestow the communications of His spiritual blessings. But I am not speaking of any inferior or modified delight in the means of grace which God has appointed for strengthening and comforting

His people on their way through this world to their home in heaven. I know—and I have no doubt every reader of these pages can point to similar cases within the range of his personal acquaintances—many persons who never absent themselves from the house of God, and who are not only habitually present in the sanctuary, but who take a pleasure in being so, and who would feel very unhappy were they to be absent ; and yet, even with the utmost stretch of charity, no one would think of setting down these individuals as converted persons. The delight in God's ordinances to which I refer, is a delight of a different kind. It is of a high and holy order. It is a supreme pleasure springing from a consciousness that he who is the subject of it enjoys intimate intercourse with God, as his covenant God and Father in Christ, through the medium of those ordinances which He has appointed for the comfort and growth in grace of His people.

Among the ordinances to which I specially allude, are family prayer, meetings for social worship with God's saints, the preaching of the Gospel, the discipline of God's house, and the administration of the Lord's Supper. Of course

these were not all in existence in Old Testament times; but there was something which corresponded with them to a certain extent, and which typified the more glorious ministration which was to succeed the one which they superseded. My meaning will be more clearly discerned when I allude to the unbounded joy, the intense delight, with which all the true worshippers of God, under the by-gone dispensation, went up, at stated times, to Jerusalem to offer their devotions to Jehovah. Not less plain will my meaning appear, when I allude to the delight which David experienced in the worship of God, as expressed in his memorable words,—that he envied the swallows which made their nests in the sanctuary; and when he said that a day spent in the courts of the Lord was to him better than a thousand spent in any other place, or in any other way than in the worship of God. I am well aware that every believer is not so advanced in the divine life as David was, and consequently, I do not expect from any Christian of the present day the same exquisite enjoyment in the public worship of God, or in attending on the other ordinances of God's appointment which he experienced; but every true Christian

will experience this delight in a high degree, as compared with any pleasure which the unrenewed mind can desire, from the means of grace and attendance on the ordinances of God: and therefore, wherever the soul of any one does take a supreme pleasure,—a far higher delight in God's ordinances, than in anything else, he has good reason to believe that the Holy Ghost has wrought in his mind and heart the great work of conversion to God.

It is an unmistakeable mark of regeneration when the *Word of God is inexpressibly precious to the soul*. He who has the witness in himself that the Scriptures are his delight, has evidence, which may well prove satisfactory to his mind, that he has been regenerated by the Divine Spirit. To every Christian the pure milk of the word is a spiritual necessity. Not only is it sweet to the taste, but is an indispensable aliment of his soul. It is felt by him to be as essential to the sustenance and strength of the spiritual life, as natural food is to his body. He who is conscious that God's Word is so regarded by him, has no reason to doubt his conversion. A love for, and delight in, the Word of God, has in all ages of the Church,

both before and subsequent to the advent of Christ into the world, been one of the great characteristics of spiritual regeneration. The Psalmist could say that that Word was “sweeter to his taste than honey and the honey-comb.” In another place he indicates the exquisite delight he took in the Scriptures of his day, though far inferior to ours, by saying that he “ate” God’s Word. And in every verse, with one or two exceptions, out of the hundred and seventy-six verses of which his hundred and nineteenth Psalm consists, there is a distinct reference to the respect which he had to God’s Word, and to the delight which he took in meditating upon it, and regulating his conduct by its righteous rules. And the feelings of all believers of the present day are the same in kind, though not in degree, as the Psalmist’s were.

A love of the Sabbath day, and a delight in its holy duties, are also an evidence of conversion which may be confidently relied on. I say this, however, on the assumption that the love and the delight referred to, are of so decided a character, as to leave no room to doubt their reality. I believe that to all unregenerate men, whatever may be their profession of religion, there is a weariness

in the Lord's day, which they can scarcely conceal from themselves or others. To all believers it is a delight and honourable; they rejoice in its recurrence, and feel it to be incomparably the best day of the seven. Instead of being irksome to them, God's holy day is the source of a blessedness to their souls which is felt by them to be a prelibation or foretaste of the inconceivable happiness which will be derived from that eternal Sabbath which all believers shall spend in heaven. And wherever this delight in the Christian Sabbath here on earth is experienced, it is, I repeat, an evidence which may be depended on, that he who feels it has been born again by the power of the Holy Spirit.

When any one takes a special pleasure in drawing near to God in *private prayer*, the circumstance may be regarded as constituting strong presumptive proof that he has experienced the converting agency of the Holy Spirit on his mind and heart. I am aware that there may be a species of pleasure in going through the mere forms of prayer, where the party is a stranger to the spirit of real prayer. I believe that this is no uncommon thing in systems which are remarkable for their ritual-

istic character. I cannot doubt that much of this is to be met with in the Church of Rome, even where the prayers are in a language not understood. But the delight in prayer to which I refer, is that delight which springs from the heart, with all its best affections, in association with enlightened mental faculties,—being powerfully drawn out to God. This, and this alone, is real prayer. The mere prostration of the body and the utterance of words, do not, of themselves, constitute prayer in the sight of God. Paul before his conversion was, in this respect, a praying man in the sight of his fellow-men, but he had never offered up a real or acceptable prayer in the sight of God, until after his conversion. Hence, the very first thing which we read regarding him, after the great change had passed over him, was, “Behold, he prayeth.” Then, for the first time, he prayed in reality, and prayed acceptably: and from that moment until we hear from his own lips that the closing scene was about to take place,—the hour when, as he himself says, “I am ready to be offered up, and the time of my departure is at hand,”—we read of him as eminently a praying man. To delight in prayer, and to feel that it were impos-

sible to live without it, is an evidence of the new birth, which is not to be gainsaid. It has been so regarded by the most spiritually-minded of God's people in all ages of the church. The observation has consequently acquired the currency of a proverb in spiritual matters, that no professed Christian will long continue to pray habitually and sin habitually, but will either give up praying or sinning. The observation is perfectly true as regards real prayer: no one will long continue in constant, real prayer and constant sinning, together. The two things are incompatible; they cannot co-exist. While they do last, there is a perpetual and arduous conflict between them, and ere long the one will be vanquished by the other. Either the professed Christian will give up his prayers or his sins. With regard to mere formal prayer, which in God's sight is not only no prayer at all, but worse than no prayer, even an abomination,—that may be continued for any length of time, even till the close of one's life, in conjunction with an uninterrupted course of sin. But that is not the prayer of which I am speaking. That is not evidence of the work of conversion having taken

place through the operation of the Holy Spirit on the mind and heart. The prayer of which I speak, is that which comes from the inward soul. It is prayer in which the whole heart is engaged, and in which the party pouring it forth before God, takes a delight, of which none but himself can form the slightest conception. He feels himself raised above the earth, and all things earthly; soars up on the wings of faith, and love, and fervent desire, not only to heaven, but to that central part of it, if we may so speak, in which God especially dwells,—showing forth His glory in the most marked manner, and dispensing the riches of His grace with the greatest liberality. The man of real prayer will not even stop here,—he will go farther still. He can find no true rest until he is made to realize, in a sensible manner, the great fact, that his heart is brought into especial and gracious contact with the loving heart of a loving God and Father in Christ. Prayer becomes the element of the converted sinner from the moment of his conversion: he could not live in any other. Shut him out from access to God in prayer, and he would be of all men the most miserable. It is just as necessary to him as food is to the

body. It is the spiritual air which he breathes. Deprive him of it, and he feels that he must spiritually die. In the breathings of his heart, and in the outgoings of the soul after God, the renewed man feels that his spiritual life and his happiness are both indissolubly bound up. Any one, let me emphatically say, who has this witness in himself need have no doubts whatever as to his having undergone that great change which passes over the whole moral and spiritual nature of man, when the Spirit of God accomplishes the work of conversion in the heart of the sinner.

The only other evidence to which I shall allude of the work of regeneration having been accomplished by the operation of the Holy Ghost, is that which is furnished by the simple fact, that the person who has undergone the great change, *loves the people of God*. This may, at first sight, appear to many not to be a marked or striking proof of conversion; but a little reflection will show those who are of this opinion that they are in error. Let no one lay little stress on that as a means by which to discriminate between the converting work of the Holy Spirit and those religious frames which are merely the fruit of nature's

operations on the mental constitution of man, for God himself lays much stress upon it. The duty and importance of one disciple loving another are indicated in the words which Jesus made use of to His apostles after He had washed their feet :—

“ If I then your Lord and Master have washed your feet, ye ought also to wash one another’s feet.” But the duty of God’s people to love one another is brought out much more clearly in the thirty-fourth verse of the thirteenth chapter of the Gospel by John ; for there the obligation is laid upon us in the shape of an explicit and direct command. Still addressing His apostles, Christ says : “ A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another ; as I have loved you that ye love one another.” And in the verse which follows, Jesus distinctly lays down the principle that the love of His disciples is a sure proof of conversion, which will not only be clear to the saint himself, but even to the world. “ By this,” He says, “ shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one for another.” The injunction to God’s people to love one another, is repeated by Jesus, in the seventeenth verse of the fifteenth chapter of the same Gospel : “ These

things," says our Lord, "I command you, that ye also love one another." And it can hardly be necessary to say, that if we are conscious of fulfilling a commandment on which Jesus laid so much strength, we have, in the degree of that consciousness, and the importance attached by our Lord to that particular commandment, an evidence of our having experienced a work of grace in our hearts by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The apostles, too, in their epistles not only enjoin and enforce the duty of God's servants to love one another, but advert to the existence of this love to the brethren as one of the clearest and most conclusive evidences which can be furnished of having experienced the regenerating agency of the Holy Spirit. "Be kindly affectioned one to another, with brotherly love preferring one another." This is the language of Paul, in the tenth verse of the twelfth chapter of his Epistle to the Romans. And in the eighth chapter, and twenty-fourth verse, of the same apostle's Second Epistle to the Corinthians, after having commended the Corinthians for their love towards each other, he exhorts them to give a practical proof of that love in the way which he had previously indicated.

“Wherefore,” he says, “shew ye to them, and before the churches, the proof of your love, and of our boasting on your behalf.” How clear the duty of God’s people to love one another was to the mind of Paul; and how anxious he was that love to each other should be a striking feature in the character of those to whom his epistles were addressed, is further shown in the fourth chapter of his First Epistle to the Thessalonians and at the ninth verse. “But,” he says, “as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.” And again in the Epistle to the Hebrews, he begins his thirteenth chapter with an exhortation to cherish feelings of affection towards their fellow saints. “Let,” he says, “brotherly love continue.” It did already exist; let it not die away nor diminish. Let it continue till the end. Peter, too, is no less emphatic in impressing on the minds of Christians the duty of loving one another: “Seeing,” says he, in the twenty-second verse of the first chapter of his First Epistle, addressed to believers generally, and not, like the Epistles of Paul, written to particular churches, “Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying

the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently." This passage furnishes a striking confirmation of the proposition on which I am dwelling at some length ; namely, that love to God's people is an evidence of a saving work having passed in the soul, by the Holy Ghost ; for a feeling of affection for one's fellow saints is directly and emphatically ascribed to the operation of the Holy Ghost. The believers addressed by Peter had " obeyed the truth through the *Spirit* unto unfeigned love of the brethren." In the seventeenth verse of the following chapter, he repeats the injunction to brotherly love :—" Love the brotherhood." And in the eighth verse of the third chapter of the same First Epistle, he recurs by way of exhortation to the same point. " Finally," he says, " be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another : love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous." John, the beloved apostle, is still more frequent in his reference to the duty of Christ's disciples to love one another. In the eleventh verse of the third chapter of his First Epistle, we hear him saying : " For this is the message that we have heard from the beginning,

that we should love one another." In the seventh verse of the succeeding chapter, the same apostle says, "Beloved, let us love one another." In the eleventh verse we are told "that if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." And in the concluding verse of the same chapter he says: "This commandment have we from him," namely, "That he who loveth God, loveth his brother also."

Since the Scripture thus lays so much stress on the duty of believers to love each other, it might safely be inferred, even had we no direct testimony to that effect, that a consciousness of cherishing a fond affection for God's people, would constitute a clear proof of the regenerating operations of the Holy Spirit in the heart. But we are not left to mere inference on the point. We have testimony to the fact, most direct and most conclusive, as has been already shown, from the lips of our Lord himself. Let us now add to that testimony given by Jesus, the testimony of that disciple whom He loved, and who perhaps enjoyed a larger share of His love to the brethren than any other of the apostles; for love seemed to be eminently the characteristic of his nature. "We know," says John in the fourteenth verse of the third chapter

of his First Epistle, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." And in the seventh verse of the subsequent chapter, already quoted, he tells us, speaking of love to the brethren, that "love is of God," and that "every one that loveth, is born of God, and knoweth God." In the twelfth verse, we are told that "if we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us."

We have thus shown from the holy oracles, in a manner the most conclusive, that one great test by which an anxious and inquiring mind may ascertain whether any change which he may be conscious of having undergone, in reference to religious things, is the work of grace, or the work of nature only, is, that of love to the people of God. It is grievous to think that a proof of the fruit of the operation of the Holy Spirit on the mind and heart, which is at once so plain, so simple, and so conclusive, should not only be little dwelt on in the preaching of the present day, but should hardly be even referred to. Myriads of perplexed and distressed believers in Christ, might, by a judicious handling of this subject, have their doubts dispelled, and be relieved from their fears.

There is no evidence of saintship like that of loving the people of God, which could come home to any Christian mind with greater clearness or power. I believe, indeed, that in the hands of the Holy Spirit, were the matter brought prominently and frequently forward in the pulpit and through the press, this test of regeneration, and of discipleship to Jesus, might be made the means of setting at rest, in almost every instance, the question of a man's Christianity ; for where is the person who cannot say whether he does or does not love the Lord's people ? The world, we are well aware, does not love them, but, on the contrary, hates and ridicules, and persecutes them ; but the people of God do love one another. That circumstance attracted the attention—and I doubt not extorted, in a sense, the admiration also,—of the heathen of old, when the religion of Jesus began to make its aggression in their spiritual domains : "See how these Christians love one another," was their remark on beholding the brotherly affection of the first disciples. And if this test of real religion is so simple and so sure, let me again express my regret that it is not more frequently employed by ministers of the Gospel, in their

dealings with the hearts and consciences of those who are in a state of doubts and fears, regarding their condition in the sight of God. I am sure that if they emphatically applied the test, it would operate as a flash of light from the throne of God which had entered the soul, and had at once enabled the person who was the subject of it, to come to a right conclusion as to his real condition in the sight of a heart-searching and rein-trying Jehovah.

And here let me say, that I have known individual instances in which doubting believers have had their doubts removed by this test of real religion, when nothing else could satisfy their troubled souls. They have had the witness of their own spirits, with that of God's Spirit, that believers were, in their esteem, the excellent of the earth. They have had the testimony of their consciences, that God's people were inexpressibly dear to them; that they delighted beyond all things in the communion of the saints; that, if circumstances permitted, they would live and die in their society; and that heaven has, if I may so say, increasing attractions in their eye, because, when once there they will be for ever with God's

glorified people. A believer may doubt, and there are periods in the experience of most believers when they do doubt, whether they love God or Christ, but it is almost impossible that any one can be in doubt or uncertainty as to whether or not he loves the people of God. And not only is it a matter of fact, that the Scriptures tell us that those who love the brethren thereby know that they have passed from death unto life; but in the very nature of things it could not be otherwise. Why do the saints love each other? Simply because they discern in each other the lineaments of their Maker's image,—simply because they see with clearness in others, the Spirit of their Lord. It is because they love God in the perfect purity of His character, as well as in the greatness of His grace, and because they admire the holiness and goodness of their Master, though not always conscious of it,—that they admire and love these qualities in their fellow saints. And nothing ought to be more conclusive to any one's mind than this,—that if he loves the people of God, he does love God himself, however dark and full of doubts his mind may have been on the point.

The very fact indeed of loving God, presupposes that he who does so was first loved of Him : for in every case, without one single exception, the saints love God because they were first loved of and by God.

CHAPTER VI.

THE HOLY SPIRIT AS A TEACHER.

No one's salvation can be secured by the mere circumstance of his conversion having been wrought by the Holy Spirit. If the Spirit were to leave him after his regeneration had been accomplished, he would inevitably and necessarily relapse into that state of spiritual guilt, and consequent ultimate perdition, from which he had been rescued by Divine mercy. It is only by the Holy Ghost dwelling in the renewed mind, and carrying on therein the work of grace moment by moment, that any descendant of fallen Adam can be finally brought to glory. It is no less the province of the Spirit to sanctify the believer and establish him in the faith, than it was His work to accomplish the new birth in the unregenerated soul.

The first great work of the Holy Spirit, as a preliminary to sanctification, establishment in the faith, and consequent comfort, is that of *instruction*

in divine things. 'The mind of the believer, for a long period after he has passed from death unto life, is comparatively ignorant in reference to the great interests of religion. He is but a babe in spiritual knowledge as well as in strength. He has clear apprehensions of certain truths, but his views of others are very indistinct. He only sees them as the natural vision of those whose sight has been restored discern their fellow men, namely, as trees walking. Even at the last, the believer in Christ hath still to deplore the darkness which broods over his mind. He sees but in part, and knows but in part. He only sees as in a glass darkly. The most enlightened saint on earth will at the last, as at the first, say of the state of his mind in regard to spiritual things, sorrowfully, and with all the emphasis which he can impart to his words, "How great is that darkness!" The best instructed of God's people whom the world ever saw, have been the veriest children in Divine knowledge, compared with any departed believer, after his spirit has been for one brief hour in the regions of light and glory. Probably no man of whom we read in the Old Testament, had a larger or deeper acquaintance with spiritual things than

the man according to God's own heart; and yet we see him, down till the latest period of which we have any record of his feelings and experiences, deploring his ignorance, and praying to be further taught of God. "Teach me," he prays, "thy paths: lead me into thy truths and teach me. Lead me, O Lord, in thy righteousness." "Lead me in thy truth;" "Lead me in a plain path;" "For thy name's sake, lead me and guide me;" "Send thy light and thy truth, let them lead me;" "Lead me in the way everlasting;" "Teach me to do thy will, for thou art my God; thy Spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness." And with a heart overflowing with gratitude, David acknowledged the instruction which he continued to receive from God. He speaks of God as instructing him and teaching him in the way that he should go. "I have not departed from thy judgments," he says, addressing God, "for thou hast taught me. How sweet," he adds, in a text already quoted, "are thy words"—the words of instruction—"unto my taste, yea, sweeter than honey and the honeycomb."

And so it was with the most eminent in knowledge as well as holiness of all the New Testament

saints. No man felt his ignorance more sensibly, or was more deeply humbled on account of it, than the Apostle Paul. This is evident in almost every page of his writings. How much greater, then, must be the necessity, that those who are so far inferior to him in their knowledge of Divine things should receive instruction on spiritual matters?

For our ignorance in reference to religious things, we are all responsible to God. It is our great guilt that we are thus ignorant; and in this respect, every believer in Jesus confesses and deplores his guilt. God created us all in the person of our first parents, in knowledge as well as in righteousness and true holiness; and it was by our sin in Adam that we lost our knowledge of spiritual things. Our ignorance, therefore, is synonymous with sin. It is everywhere so represented in the sacred volume. God frequently makes it a matter of the gravest complaint against His ancient people, that they were so ignorant. Isaiah begins his book of prophecies by an appeal from God himself, to the heavens and the earth in connection with the controversy he had with his Israel; and one of the counts in the indictment is—"The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his

master's crib ; but Israel doth not know, my people do not consider." Jesus also, in the days of His earthly sojourn, often complained of the ignorance of His disciples. The apostles too, in their epistles, deplore and condemn the ignorance of the churches to whom their epistles were addressed.

No one can carefully read the Bible without being struck with the frequency with which the importance of acquiring a knowledge of divine things, is impressed on our minds. To know God is one of the most frequent commands in the Old Testament, and our obligations to know the Father and the Son, are often and emphatically urged upon us in the New. The dying command of David to his son Solomon was, that he should know the God of his fathers, and with that knowledge he connected the acceptable service of God, and the blessings which were sure to follow. "And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind : for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts : if thou seek him, he will be found of thee ; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee

off for ever." Peter concludes his Second Epistle with an exhortation to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

It is a blessed thought, and shows in a remarkable manner the riches of God's grace, that in no one instance is a believer called to the performance of any specific duty, without a specific and suitable provision being made for his discharge of that duty. This is specially manifest in the present case. As God imposes on all His people in a way different from that in which He does with the world, the duty of acquiring a knowledge of divine things, so He has made the most ample provision for our fulfilment, in this respect, of His good pleasure. As the kind of knowledge, in religious matters, which He would have His people attain unto, cannot be acquired by any human agency, and could only be obtained by Divine instruction, He has graciously promised to give His Holy Spirit for that purpose. Speaking of God's dealings with His people, when in the wilderness, Nehemiah distinctly reveals the fact, that the Holy Spirit was thus early given to them as a Spirit of instruction: "Thou gavest also," says the prophet, addressing himself to God, "thy

good Spirit to instruct them." This especially refers to spiritual illumination and instruction; for with regard to the physical journeyings of the Israelites, the same prophet tells us, in the preceding verse, that the pillar of the cloud led them by day, and the pillar of fire by night: "Yet thou in thy manifold mercies forsookest them not in the wilderness: the pillar of the cloud departed not from them by day, to lead them in the way; neither the pillar of fire by night, to show them light, and the way wherein they should go." But though the Holy Spirit was thus early revealed as the teacher or instructor of God's saints, the Spirit was not so largely or so sensibly bestowed as a Teacher of the saints in Old Testament times, as in those in which the new dispensation was ushered into the world. It was in reference to New Testament times that Joel prophesied, when, in the second chapter and twenty-eighth and twenty-ninth verses of his book, he represents God as saying, "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions; and also upon the servants

and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit." On the day of Pentecost, soon after the ascension of our Lord, this remarkable prophecy received a remarkable fulfilment. Peter, as recorded in the seventeenth, eighteenth, nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first verses of the second chapter of the Acts, makes an emphatic reference to it, and even quotes almost verbatim the language of Joel. It was only now, for the first time, that the Holy Ghost had been abundantly shed abroad in the minds and hearts of God's people. Hitherto He had been given, but only in a measure: now He was given without measure. And the first fruits of His descent in this copious abundance, was the conversion of three thousand under one sermon, which Peter delivered on the occasion.

What a marvellous and mighty display of the efficiency with which the Holy Spirit acts as a Teacher, was furnished by the results of Peter's preaching! What a world of light must have been by his agency poured in on their minds and hearts during the deliverance of that discourse of Peter! How rapidly their ignorance regarding themselves and the Saviour must have

vanished before the Holy Spirit's enlightening and instructing influences ! The work of illumination must have been instantaneous. The extent of the knowledge they had, through the teaching of the Spirit, thus suddenly acquired respecting the evil of sin, their own guiltiness in the sight of God, and the consequent peril to which they were exposed, may be inferred from the expression of Peter, that "they were pricked to the heart," and from the language which they themselves employed—"Men and brethren, what shall we do ?" So deep were their convictions of their guilt before God, and so vivid were their apprehensions of eternal perdition, as the consequence of their sins, that they were ready and willing to do anything, with a view to their salvation, which Peter and the other apostles might suggest to them. To those who would see the whole of this profoundly interesting portion of God's holy Word fully expounded, I would recommend the Rev. William Arthur's able and eminently instructive work, "THE TONGUE OF FIRE."

Immediately before His crucifixion, our adorable Lord made very emphatic promises to His disciples, of the gift of the Holy Ghost as an infinite

good which the church should receive in consequence of His ascension into heaven. And it will be observed, that when speaking of the Spirit in the chief capacities in which He was to come, He spoke of Him in a very marked manner, as coming in the character of a teacher. "The Comforter," says Jesus, "whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." In a preceding verse of the same fourteenth chapter of the Gospel by John, Jesus speaks of the Holy Ghost as the Spirit of *truth*, and consequently whosoever receives Him is instructed in the truth: "And I will pray the Father," He says, in the sixteenth and seventeenth verses of the chapter, "and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." In the twenty-sixth verse of the following chapter, Christ again refers to the Holy Ghost as the Spirit of truth, and as such acting in the capacity of a Teacher: "But when the Comforter,

is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father: he shall testify of me."

In the eighth, ninth, tenth, and eleventh verses of the same chapter, we have a further illustration of the character of the Spirit as an instructor; "When he is come," says Christ, "he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more: of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged."

Still more emphatically does our Lord, in the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth verses of the sixteenth chapter of the same book, refer to the Holy Ghost in His capacity of a Teacher of believers. "When he," says Jesus, "the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine:

therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shew it unto you."

At this part of the chapter, it is of importance to remark, that in speaking, as man, of the benefits which believers would derive from the descent of the Holy Ghost, He spoke from His own experience. I am not sure whether the fact that Jesus, as man, was Himself instructed, led, and guided by the Spirit, is apprehended with sufficient clearness by the saints of God. It is a most precious truth. It ought to be unspeakably blessed to know and remember, that when Jesus attached so much importance to the indwelling of the Holy Ghost in the minds of believers, as a Teacher, He spoke from the depths of His own experience. As man, Jesus needed the teaching and guidance of the Holy Spirit, in the same sense as all His followers do. In accordance with this fact, we read that on His baptism by John, in the river Jordan, the Holy Ghost visibly descended on Him. "And Jesus," we are told, "when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: and lo

a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." The inauguration of the public mission of our Lord was thus characterized by the visible descent of the Holy Spirit upon Him. And in all His future ministrations and actions, and in every word He spoke and every act He performed, He was guided and governed by the Holy Ghost. On the occasion of His great temptation of forty days' duration in the wilderness, we are told, that "Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness." In the second verse of the first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, there is a very explicit enunciation of the great truth that Jesus was under the special instruction of the Holy Spirit, in all His ministrations among men. "Until," says the inspired historian, "Jesus was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen." But it is not necessary that we should dwell on the fact of Christ's having been under the influence of the Holy Spirit's teaching, during the whole period of His public ministry on earth. It was distinctly prophesied that he should be so.

“ Behold,” says Isaiah, in the first verse of the forty-second chapter of his prophecies, “ Behold my servant whom I uphold ; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth ! I have put my Spirit upon him : he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.” The putting of the Spirit upon Jesus, it is unnecessary to say refers only to Him in His human nature. As God, He needed not the Holy Spirit, for, regarded as a Divine person, the Spirit was an essential part of Himself. It ought to be—let me here repeat what I said before—inexpressibly sweet to the souls of God’s saints, thus to know that their Lord when on earth was under the tuition of the Holy Ghost, in the same sense as they themselves are.

And as Jesus in this respect was, when He dwelt among men in the days of His flesh, so have God’s people in all ages been. The whole of that blessed Book, which is the charter of the believer’s rights, and the chart which guides him on his pathway to glory, is the fruit of the teaching of the Holy Spirit. Though written by men, so far as the mere mechanical process of committing it to paper is concerned, it is not the result of either the innate or acquired knowledge of those from whose

pens it proceeded. It was not, in this respect, of man, nor given by man, but by God through the medium of His Spirit. "All Scripture," we are told, "was given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, and for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be thoroughly furnished unto every good work." "Holy men," it is elsewhere said, "spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." In other words, all the Old and New Testament writers were taught by the Spirit of God, and believers in the present age are taught by the Divine Spirit, through the medium of their writings. But in addition to this general statement of this great and important truth, we have special illustrations of it in various parts of the Word of God. Let me refer to one or two examples which clearly set forth the fact. The case of the aged Simeon is one which is too remarkable to be passed over. It is recorded in the second chapter of Luke, in the twenty-fifth to the thirty-fifth verses, "And, behold," says the Evangelist, "there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him. And it was

revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law, then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel. And Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him. And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; (yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."

It will be observed in this passage, that Simeon—the aged saint of God—was first taught by the Holy Ghost to expect and to watch for the advent of Jesus, called on the occasion, "the visitation of Israel;" and then, that at a particular period he was directed by the Spirit to go into the temple, where

he would see the holy child Jesus. No less was it the result of the teaching of the Holy Ghost, when Simeon predicted, in the thirty-fourth and thirty-fifth verses, what the infant Saviour would prove to the world, and what his mother Mary should experience in connection with the future history of the Divine babe of Bethlehem. Jesus himself, too, enjoined on His apostles that they should expect, because they would receive, the special teaching of the Holy Ghost in every emergency in which they should be placed. When He forewarned them of what they should have to suffer for His name's sake, by being among other things brought before magistrates and powers, because of their proclamation of the Gospel message, He instructed them to take no thought as to what they should say, inasmuch as that the Holy Ghost should teach them in that hour what they should say.

Another special illustration of the truth that the Holy Ghost is the great teacher of God's people, will be found in the passage in the Acts of the Apostles, which commences at the eighth verse of the fourth chapter and ends at the twelfth. "Then Peter," we are told, "filled with the Holy

Ghost, said unto them," &c. It is unnecessary to quote the passage: it is enough to state that the series of solemn and searching truths which Peter then proclaimed, were the results of that instruction which the Holy Ghost imparted to the mind of the apostle. Paul went up by the Spirit unto Jerusalem; and the Holy Ghost witnessed in every city, that bonds and afflictions awaited him.

Of the special teaching of the Holy Ghost, in special circumstances, in the history of God's people, there are impressive instances. As recorded in the fourth verse of the thirteenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, after the Holy Ghost had said, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work of the ministry, whereunto I have called them," we read as follows:—"So they being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia, and from thence they sailed to Cyprus." All that is recorded in the rest of this chapter of what these two apostles said and did, was under the instruction and guidance of the Holy Spirit; but another distinct and emphatic recognition of the truth of the Spirit's teaching, is given in the ninth, tenth, and eleventh verses, when "Saul, who is

called Paul, filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him," namely, Elymas the sorcerer.

Of the general truth, that the Holy Spirit is the Teacher, in all divine things, of God's people, the proofs are so numerous, that anything more than a simple reference to it is unnecessary.

It is the Spirit that instructs us in the great fact that we are the children of God. "The Spirit itself," says Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, "beareth witness with our spirits, that we are the children of God." In the second chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, we are furnished with various enunciations of the truth, that the Holy Ghost is our instructor in spiritual matters. All the great and gracious provisions which God has made for the happiness of the saints in heaven, are there described as being made known, so far as we can know and comprehend them in our present state, by the Holy Ghost. In the tenth and eleventh verses it is thus written: "But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searches all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the

things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God."

No language could more explicitly or more forcibly set forth the great fact, that whatever spiritual knowledge the believer may attain unto, it is all the fruit of the Divine Spirit's tuition. There is a reiteration of the same truth in the twelfth and thirteenth verses: "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual."

And in another form, yet not less conclusively, by implication, we are told, in the fourteenth verse, that whatever we know of spiritual things, we owe to the tuition of the Holy Ghost: "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

In the twelfth chapter of the same First Epistle to the Corinthians, the truth which we are endeavouring to bring before the minds of our readers

is broadly stated: "No man," it is there said, "can say that Jesus is Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." In the seventh and eighth verses of the same chapter, there is a further enunciation of the same truth: "But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit, the word of wisdom; to another, the word of knowledge by the same Spirit."

The knowledge of that most precious of all truths to the believer's mind,—even his election of God, is ascribed to the illumination or instructing influences of the Spirit. "For our Gospel," says Paul, addressing the Thessalonians, "came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance."

In various parts of the Epistle to the Hebrews, the fact of the Spirit's being the Teacher of believers, is brought prominently out. "Wherefore," as the Holy Spirit saith, "to-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts," &c. After the description given in the ninth chapter, of the tabernacle, there occur these words: "The Holy Ghost thus signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the

first tabernacle was yet standing." So that nothing of a spiritual nature is, under any circumstances, nor by any symbols, to be learnt, but by the teaching of the Holy Spirit.

It is not necessary that we should proceed further in our proofs of this point. It has been, we feel assured, made sufficiently plain. Let us now glance at the principal subjects in which the Holy Ghost instructs the people of God.

First of all, the Spirit enlightens the believer's mind in the knowledge of *God* Himself. It was by shedding abroad a new and comparatively effulgent light on the character of God, that the believer was first converted. He was then brought out of darkness into the marvellous light of the Gospel. It was God by His Spirit who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, and shine on his heart to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ. Much may be learnt by the unconverted sinner respecting the character of God, by the mere unaided light of nature ; but no sinner under heaven ever was or ever will be brought to a saving knowledge of God, by the unassisted illuminating agencies either of creation or of provi-

dence, or of both together. The works and the ways of God, as seen in the material world, and in the manner in which its affairs are administered, proclaim aloud His wisdom, power, and goodness. But they speak with an uncertain sound, if indeed they can be said to speak at all, of His purity and justice; while they are wholly silent as to the attribute of His infinite mercy. The Scriptures alone, for which we are indebted to the Holy Spirit, utter a voice regarding these perfections in the character of God, and it is only when the Spirit pours into the mind and heart this glorious light of the Gospel regarding the character of God, that the sinner undergoes the great change which the Scriptures represent as a translation from darkness into light, and from the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of God's dear Son.

And the believer, after he has undergone this great and gracious transformation, both of character and condition, still needs, and will need till the closing scene, to be enlightened and instructed regarding the character of God. Though his views respecting the essential attributes of the Divine Being are comparatively clear and correct,

he has yet much to learn with reference to the ways of God, both in providence and grace. The dispensations of Divine Providence are often shrouded in darkness to the best of believers. God's ways are in the sea and His paths in the great deep. Clouds and darkness are round about Him. The believer feels confounded at the way in which God sometimes deals with him. All things seem to be against him. He walks in darkness and feels that he has no light. This is never literally the fact, but the Christian believes it is. It is in such circumstances, the province and the pleasure of the Holy Spirit to dispel the dense darkness which envelopes the mind of the believer, and to show clearly to him, that God orders all things in providence for His own glory, and His people's good. He brings the conviction home to the believer's mind, with a clearness and fulness which show that the light is from Heaven, that God, in all His providential dealings with him, is acting not only in infinite mercy, but in accordance with the dictates of an unerring wisdom.

And so with regard to the knowledge which the Christian acquires through the teaching of the Holy Spirit, in the more direct carrying out of the

work of grace in his heart. He is daily led to learn more of the boundless love of the Father to his soul; and that has the effect of deepening and purifying the affection which he feels towards God. His views, too, of the perfect purity of God's character, become clearer and clearer, the longer he lives on earth. And that results in an ever-increasing intensity of desire to be more and more conformed to the holy image of a holy God. Increasing knowledge of the grace and glory which characterize the conception and carrying out of the great scheme of salvation, is a process which the believer is conscious of going steadily on in his mind; and with the growing conviction which all this produces, of the obligations under which he is laid to love God more, and to serve him better than before, there is a corresponding increase of desire so to love and so to serve the Most High. It is the special office of the Holy Ghost to impart this ever-increasing knowledge to the believer, and in the fulfilment of that gracious function the Spirit takes a special delight.

The Holy Spirit no less acts in the capacity of a teacher with respect to the *Lord Jesus Christ*. As regards our blessed Redeemer, as well as God,

the believer will feel more and more sensibly as he proceeds along the pathway which conducts him to heaven, that his knowledge of Christ, great as it is compared with what it was before his conversion,—for even then there may have been much intellectual knowledge of Jesus,—is but very small indeed compared with what it ought to be, and may be, even in this world. Much more is to be learnt respecting the circumstances under which our Lord undertook, in the councils of eternity, to become our substitute and surety,—of His wondrous assumption of our nature into a junction with his own Divine nature,—of the poverty and humility of His birth,—of the life of suffering and sorrow which He led on earth, of the ignominy and agony which characterized the close of His earthly existence,—of his resurrection from the grave, and His ascension up into glory,—His intercession at the right hand of His Father for all who believe in Him, and of His second coming to receive to heaven, to be for ever with Himself, all for whom he shed His blood. These are all themes which will continue to occupy the thoughts of the believer, so long as he remains in this world, and regarding which he is

growingly conscious he has still to learn immeasurably more than he has yet attained unto. We are enjoined to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The mere fact of the command being given to increase in knowledge, implies not only that we are still defective in our knowledge of the Saviour, but that an increase of knowledge of Him is attainable. When Paul told the Corinthians that he determined to know nothing among them save Jesus Christ and Him crucified, he did not exclusively refer to the knowledge which he had already obtained of Christ, but to that further knowledge, also, which he felt was still attainable by him. All his earnest prayers and fervent desires for an increased knowledge of Christ, which he poured out or expressed on behalf of those to whom his epistles were addressed, imply that greater progress than they had yet made in the knowledge of their Lord and Saviour, was attainable. One of Paul's prayers to this effect is recorded in the seventeenth verse of the first chapter of his Epistle to the Ephesians: "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ the Father of Glory may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and reve-

lation in the knowledge of him." They had already attained to a considerable measure of this spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, but Paul knew that they needed an increase, both for their sanctification and comfort, and therefore for that increase he fervently prayed. In the fourteenth to the nineteenth verses of the third chapter of the same epistle, Paul prays yet more fully and emphatically for an increase of knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, on the part of the Ephesians: "For this cause," he says, "I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God." The Ephesians had a large measure of knowledge of the love of Christ, but they needed much more, and much more was attainable, a fact which is most

forcibly set forth in the remarkable words, "to know the love of Christ, which *passeth* knowledge." In other words, not only was there room then for an increased knowledge of the love of Christ, but as that love was so vast as to surpass all our powers of comprehension, there will be room for additions to our knowledge of the Redeemer's love through all eternity. The same sentiment is expressed by the apostle in the thirteenth verse of the fourth chapter of the same Epistle: "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

All that we have said to show that there can be no saving, or sanctifying, or comforting knowledge of God the Father, or Christ the Son, but by the teaching of the Holy Ghost,—may be equally predicated respecting the *Spirit* himself. Though the Scriptures are not so express in their utterances with regard to the teaching of the Holy Ghost in relation to Himself, as they are in relation to the Father and the Son, the great fact so fully pervades the whole tenor of the New Testament, that no one can doubt it. Jesus, before

His departure from this world, comforted the hearts of His sorrowing disciples by telling them that when He had left them, He would send them the Holy Ghost to instruct them ; and that among the lessons He would give them, would be included His bringing all things to their remembrance which He had said unto them.

Now among these things were much concerning the Holy Spirit himself, both as a teacher, a sanctifier, and comforter. Unless the saints of God were especially instructed by the Holy Ghost respecting Himself, they could never acquire any saving or sanctifying knowledge of His person or His work. It is as much His province to acquaint us with what He himself is, as it is His office to instruct us in the knowledge of the Father and the Son. It is only by His own blessed teaching, regarding Himself, that believers are led to adore His person, and rightly to appreciate His work. No one ever yet had clear perceptions of the perfect Deity of the Holy Ghost, or of the absolute necessity of His agency in the work of regeneration, illumination, and sanctification, unless specially taught by the Spirit. And just in proportion to the fulness and explicitness of the

instruction which the Holy Ghost imparts regarding Himself, will be the measure of our adoration of, and gratitude to Him for the work of enlightenment which He has wrought within us. Wherever we meet with a Christian who has peculiarly exalted views of the character of the Holy Spirit, we may conclude with unerring certainty that those views are the fruit of the Spirit's own especial tuition.

The Holy Ghost also instructs believers in those things which pertain to *themselves*. As it was through His instrumentality that they were first made to see their own guilt and ruin, with sufficient clearness to constrain them to cry out "What must we do to be saved?" and were then led by faith to the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world; so He continues the process of enlightenment until their knowledge is made perfect in glory. They feel day by day, with a growing depth of conviction, how much there still remains to be wrought in them, and done for them, before they can be prepared for glory; and contemporaneously with this constantly increasing conviction of the extent to which corruption prevails in their nature, there is

the persuasion, also, keeping pace with the growing conviction of the greatness of the sin that dwells within them, that they can of themselves do nothing to avert its progress. The word of God and their own painful experience speak to their minds and consciences with equal explicitness and authority on this point. No less are they convinced that it is not within the power of any merely human instrumentality to deliver them from the bondage of corruption under which—though blessedly conscious that they are believers in Jesus—they daily and hourly groan. But they know at the same time, because the Holy Ghost himself has taught them the great and gracious truth, that the Spirit can renew them increasingly in holiness. He does this by giving them such a sight and sense of their sin as they never had before. Every succeeding hour of their lives, sin in the abstract appears to the saints of God increasingly sinful ; but this is especially the case with regard to their own individual iniquities. It is still more emphatically so with regard to the sins which they have committed since the period of their regeneracy by the grace of God. All sin is expressibly sinful in the sight of the

saint, but there is, if I may use the expression, a tenfold more terrible heinousness, to his spiritual eye, in those acts of transgression which he has committed since the time that God visited his soul in mercy. To think that he should disregard the authority, and wander from the ways of that God who had been so gracious to him as to pluck him in His free and boundless compassion as a brand from the burning, and had daily and hourly since then, manifested to him all the affection of a Father whose heart is overflowing with infinite tenderness, and who had mercifully kept him from falling when conscious of his own innate tendency, moment by moment, to depart from God—to have a clear perception and a profound conviction of all this clothes, the guilt contracted by the believer, since he realized the great fact of his regeneration and adoption into the family of God, with a degree of enormity, far surpassing that with which he invests the sins he committed before he was sensibly made a recipient of God's saving grace. I cannot doubt that in this part of my book I powerfully touch a chord in the heart of many of my readers. I feel assured that my views and words receive a ready response in

multitudes of minds. Cannot you, my fellow-believer,—for I wish to speak to all as if I were addressing myself as well as my readers individually,—cannot you, *do* not you, set your seal to what I have just said? Have you not seen a special aggravation in those acts of guilt which you have committed since you first professed to be a saint of God, and a servant of Jesus Christ? When you think what a God and Father you have in heaven — how tenderly He has dealt with you,—how liberally He has showered down His choicest blessings on you,—how He has borne with you when you could scarcely bear with yourself,—when you reflect on all this, do you not feel that there is an overwhelming aggravation in the sins you have committed against God, since he has thus dealt with you in boundless mercy and infinite tenderness? Such ought to be your feeling, and such *is*, more or less sensibly, the feeling of every child of God. It is the office of the Holy Spirit to present the sins of the Christian, since he was born again, in this light. And when they are so seen, it is a proof that the Holy Ghost has been carrying on His saving work in the mind and heart. Where any

one is conscious that he does not discern a special enormity in the sins he has committed, since he professed to be a believer in Christ, he may rest assured that there is something radically wrong in his spiritual condition, and he should not delay an hour—no, nor a moment—in having recourse to deep searchings of heart before God, in relation to this matter.

Will my readers bear with me for a few moments, while I unburden my conscience by a full expression of my views in reference to what I regard as a fearful error, which extensively prevails in connection with this point? From the pulpit and also from the press, in sermons and works on Christian experience, we are warned with a vehemence which is unwonted on the part of the preachers or the writers, against the people of God dwelling on the corruptions of their own hearts and the sins of their lives. The favourite phraseology of those to whom I allude, is, that believers should not be always delving into themselves, but should be ever looking to Christ. "Look to Christ" Assuredly. No man ever was or will be saved without intently and steadfastly looking to Christ. But looking to Christ

is surely not incompatible with looking to ourselves, —looking into the recesses of our own hearts. Unless I am grievously in error regarding the genius of the Gospel scheme, no one, whether he be sinner or saint, will ever look aright to Christ until he has looked deep below the surface of his own sinful nature. Of no truth do I feel a more thorough conviction than of this, that to exhort believers not to persist in “delving into themselves,” or seeking to sound the depths of their own depravity, is not in accordance with the mind of the Spirit. It is, on the contrary, wholly opposed to it. It is, I feel firmly persuaded, the teaching of an agent at utter variance with the Holy Spirit. It is a device of Satan, and one, too, of his most cunning and successful devices. No man, — unless I strangely misconceive the meaning of God’s Word, and have grievously mistaken the lessons of Christian biography, and of my own experience as well, — ever yet looked at Christ aright, who had not previously looked largely and faithfully into the state of his own heart. It is only as we have just views of ourselves, as utterly depraved and hopelessly undone, that we will prize the Lord Jesus Christ and the salvation which He has wrought out for us,

and is now pressing on our acceptance. It is only as the Holy Spirit brings home the conviction with irresistible power to our minds, that we have no righteousness of our own, that we will be led to lay hold of the righteousness of Christ. It is only as we see our pollution, that we shall be induced to come, day by day, and moment by moment, and wash in the blood of Christ Jesus, which cleanseth from all sin. If the humbling conviction has not been forced upon us after a thorough self-examination, under the guidance of the Spirit, that we have no merit of our own—not even the semblance of the slightest merit, we shall never appreciate aright, nor appropriate to ourselves by faith the merits of the Redeemer. Let me, therefore, with all earnestness and affection, beseech those into whose hands this volume may, in God's providence, come, not to act in accordance with the counsels of those who would tell you not to "delve into yourselves." Let me, on the contrary, advise and urge you to "delve into yourselves,"—to look fairly and fully at the depravity of your own natures. But do not look into yourselves only. Look no less—look even more—earnestly, stedfastly, and believingly at the Lord Jesus

Christ. The more you see of your own unworthiness, the clearer will you discern, and the higher you will appreciate His infinite merits. The more vividly you perceive that if left to yourselves you must perish eternally, the more will you prize the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Never cease to look at yourselves, but, oh, be sure that you never for one moment withdraw the eye of faith from Christ and His finished work. That is the Scriptural method, and it is because that method is not observed that so many of the saints of God are haughty instead of humble, and that their views of Christ are not so vivid as they ought to be and might be. Just, I repeat, as the believer is impressed with a sense of his own depravity and helplessness, which he only can be by looking fully and faithfully at the corruptions of his own nature, will Jesus be exalted in his affections, because he will then be seen in all the glory of His person and all the graciousness and efficacy of His work.

It were easy to adduce innumerable passages from God's Word to place this point in so clear a light, that no one would be able to controvert the views which I am endeavouring to place before my readers. Let a glance at the experiences of

one or two of the most eminent of God's saints suffice. Out of a long list of those whose names are recorded as most remarkable for their spiritual attainments, in the Old Testament, let me specify only Job and David. The former seemed to have an abiding and overwhelming conviction of his entire unworthiness. He confessed and deplored his utter vileness. A sense of his uncleanness seemed never to be absent from his mind. He abhorred himself in dust and ashes. It seemed as if in his own sight it were impossible that he could be more black, in a spiritual sense, than he was. With regard to the Psalmist again, we know that his language was, that not only could no sin be greater in his own eyes than that of which he had been guilty, but that his sin was ever before him. It was never absent from his mind. A consciousness of his guilt followed him wherever he went. By day and by night it stared him in the face. Like a hideous spectre, it haunted his every step. I know that the language which he employed, in his fifty-first Psalm, in reference to his guiltiness, had a special reference to the double act of enormous sin which he there deplores; but no one can read his psalms generally,

without feeling that, while he was so pre-eminent in holiness over all the other saints of whom we read in the Old Testament, as to have obtained the distinction conferred by the pen of inspiration, of being the man according to God's own heart,—he had habitually a profound impression of his own great guiltiness in the sight of God. It was that which made him spend so many sleepless nights—that extorted groans from him as he lay on his bed—that made his tears become meat unto him—and that constrained him so often, with such awful emphasis, to refer to the deep disquietude of soul which he felt; a disquietude of soul that seemed at times to bring him to the very verge of despair. It is impossible, indeed, to read his psalms without feeling this. No man ever had a clearer view or deeper conviction of the desperate depravity of his nature, than the man according to God's own heart. He had been taught the humbling truth by the Holy Ghost, and he had learnt the lesson from his own painful experience, when he fell into the double sin already alluded to, and which is recorded so touchingly, and in a spirit of profound penitence, in the fifty-first Psalm. Hence his earnest prayer, “Keep thy

servant from presumptuous sin," that is, gross acts of guilt, sins of the most open and aggravated kind. He did not content himself with praying that he might be preserved from secret sins only—sins of the heart, which might never be known to any but God and himself. He had a deep and abiding consciousness that there still existed in his nature, regenerated though it was, the germs of all guilt, and that if left to himself, there was no sin too gross, no act of iniquity of too flagrant a nature, for him to commit. And if such were David's views of himself, and such his experience, surely we, who are the veriest babes in the Divine life compared with him, ought to have still more humbling thoughts of ourselves.

In the New Testament, too, there are examples no less striking, of the vivid views which the most eminent of God's saints have had of the greatness of their guilt. Every reader of this work will at once, in his own mind, refer to the apostle of the Gentiles as one. Look at the language which he employs, from the fourteenth to the twenty-fifth verses of his seventh chapter to the Romans, when alluding to the prevalence of corruption within him, and the misery which that

corruption caused him : “ For we know,” he says, “ that the law is spiritual : but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do, I allow not : for what I would, that do I not ; but what I hate that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing : for to will is present with me : but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not : but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man : but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God ; but with the flesh the law of sin.”

We see here blessed evidences of Paul’s tri-

umphs, through God's grace, over the depravity of his heart; but that did not prevent his seeing his sins clearly, nor deploring them deeply. Elsewhere he speaks of himself as being of sinners the chief,—not that he was so before his conversion only, when he breathed out threatenings and slaughters against the disciples of Christ, and was a blasphemer against the Saviour, who shed His blood to redeem his soul from death; but that he was so then, at the moment he was writing his epistle to Timothy. His language is not, Of sinners I *was* the chief, but, Of sinners I *am* the chief. And so far from concurring with those whose unscriptural and most pernicious views we are combating when they exhort their hearers and readers not to look into themselves, nor to think what they are, but to look to Christ, and think what He is, Paul urged the various bodies of believers to examine themselves, and to search their own hearts, lest, after all, they should only have been deceiving themselves. And every one that is taught by the Spirit of God, will come to the same conclusion as the apostle of the Gentiles did, regarding the corruptions of his own nature.

All the biographies of ancient Christians, of a date posterior to the closing of the Scripture record, speak the same language. And it will invariably be found that just in proportion to the vividness of their views of the greatness of their own guilt, will have been the measure of their holiness, and the degree in which they adored the riches of God's grace in rescuing them from the eternal ruin which, had they been left to themselves, would have been their inevitable doom. What must not that remarkable man of God, John Bradford, have felt, respecting the depravity of his nature, when he said, on every occasion on which he saw any criminal on his way to be executed, "That's me;"—meaning that such was the innate corruption of his heart, that but for the restraints of God's grace, he would have committed the same crimes which had brought that malefactor to the scaffold. What John Bradford felt when he so expressed himself, is the feeling of all who are taught by the Spirit of God.

It can scarcely be necessary to say that, though the people of God have thus to deplore the depravity of their nature, and will have to do so to the last, yet that there is nothing slavish in their feel-

ings. So far as the penal consequences of their guilt are concerned, they have nothing to fear. Christ, as their substitute, hath suffered the punishment due to their sins. He has borne their sins in His own body on the tree. Their views of their guilt are purely filial. It is because their sins are committed against a loving Father, that they appear before them in aspects of such terrible aggravation, and that they deplore them from the lowest depths of their heart. It is because their sins are forgiven, that they mourn over them with such an intensity of sorrow. Those who are rightly taught by the Holy Spirit will never adopt the language, which is so often to be heard in many pulpits, and to be met with in the pages of many publications, that believers have no longer anything to do with their sins, because Christ has taken them all on Himself. That is most unscriptural language; it is, we are constrained to add, most unseemly so. It may not be so meant, but it looks very like making light of sin. It is the quintessence of Antinomianism. And it has often been to me the source of profound and painful surprise, how any real Christian can so express himself. Though sin may thus seem light to, if

I may employ a phrase which I have never anywhere met with—some believing sinner—it was no light thing to Christ, when He had to endure the penalty due to it.

The enormity of the believer's guilt ought never to be absent from his mind, nor ever be diminished in his view, when he remembers what it cost God and Christ to deliver the soul from its fearful consequences,—God in giving His Son to die an ignominious and excruciating death, and Jesus, in voluntarily submitting to such a death, after a life of unexampled humiliation, hardships, and sufferings. In so far as the legal consequences of sin are concerned, the saint, I admit—and would ever desire to adore the riches of God's grace for it—has nothing whatever to do. Christ, as his substitute, has done all for the believer that the strictest and sternest justice can demand. But though the law has no further claim to prefer against the children of God, that surely can never be regarded as a reason why we should look lightly on sin, and feel as if we had nothing more to do with it. The child whose heart is full to overflowing, of filial affection towards a loving and indulgent father, will not be unconcerned when he

has acted contrary to the wishes of his parent, because he knows that his misconduct will not be punished. That very consideration, on the contrary, leads him to grieve all the more deeply that he should have done amiss. It comes home to the heart of such a son, with a force which none but himself can feel, that there is something supremely heinous in an act of disobedience which he may have committed against a father so loving, so forbearing, so forgiving. And such ought to be the feelings of all believers in reference to their sins. And such, let me say again, *will* be the feelings of all believers whose mercy it is to be under the special tuition of the Holy Ghost. They will live and die under a deep conviction—a conviction which will be ever deepening until death—that every act of sin which they commit, is characterized by special aggravations, and that the proper posture for them to assume, and in which ever to remain, is to have their hand on their mouth, and their mouth in the dust, while their lips give utterance to the language of their inmost hearts—“Unclean, unclean are we.” Many of the most godly men that ever lived, have had such vivid views of the heinousness of their guilt,

though never for a moment doubting that Christ had borne the punishment due to it, and that consequently no penal results could possibly be experienced by them,—that they have employed the language of the publican, “God be merciful to me a sinner,” and some of them have actually died in the utterance of that, as their last language on earth. Nor could any language be more suitable, or any prayer more appropriate. The most eminent believers feel that they live as sinners and that they must die as sinners, needing God’s mercy as much at the last as at the first.

But it is necessary that I should here make one or two observations, in the way of caution or admonition, lest the believer should pervert the views I have sought to impress on his mind, regarding, at times, the partial power and prevalence of sin within him. The doctrine is liable to great abuse, and has been greatly abused by some of God’s saints. While we are not to shut our eyes to the greatness of the guilt we have contracted since the day of our regeneracy, but, on the contrary, are to have it ever before us, we must take care lest, in a sense, we make a merit of thus steadfastly looking upon it. Strange, and even anomalous,

as the idea may seem, some believers make a kind of Saviour of their sins. They speak to others in terms which can leave no other impression. They are perpetually saying, "Oh, what a great sinner I am !" The sentiment is true—true to an extent of which they, themselves, can form no proper conception ; but their feeling at the time of making the confession, and the tone and manner in which they make it, too conclusively indicate that they are, however unconscious they may be of the fact, making a merit of their sense of sin. This is a state of mind against which all believers ought to be on their guard. They are not, if I may so express myself, to rest in their sins, but are to betake themselves at once, by faith, to Christ. While one eye rests on the greatness of their guilt, the other is to be fixed on the infinite merits of the Saviour : while they are conscious from their soul's sad experience, that, partially sanctified though they be, there is not a sin too heinous for them to commit, were it not for the restraints of Divine grace, they must remember that needful grace is supplied, moment by moment, through the medium of a firm, unfaltering faith in Christ. So long as the eye rests on

the finished work of Jesus—so long as the believer looks steadily at the Cross, he is safe. It is by faith we stand. The moment the eye of faith is withdrawn from the Lamb of God, that moment the believer relapses into a condition of spiritual weakness,—so that he is sure to fall before even the feeblest assaults of his enemies, whether those enemies be Satan, or the world, or the corruptions of his own evil heart.

In connection with the believer's duty to look his depravity fully and fairly in the face, there is another word of caution which I know is much needed by many of God's people. They are so anxious that their sins should appear in vivid colours before them, that they often pray to God that He would be pleased to show them their guilt in all its enormity. This is one of many prayers which the saints often offer up to God in their ignorance. It is a most injudicious prayer. If God were to answer it, they could not survive. Constituted as human nature is, no one could see his own sins in all their enormity, and yet live. No one ever has so seen his sins, and it is a mercy to know that no one ever will. Even a partial view of this has often driven men to des-

pair and to suicide ; it has dethroned the reason of others. Happily, the prayer cannot be answered. Not only will God never hear such a prayer, but there is a moral impossibility in His doing so ; for sin being, in itself, an infinite evil against a holy God, its enormity cannot be fully comprehended by any finite mind. God alone can see the sins of His creatures, whether in their regenerate or unregenerate state, in all the depths of their heinousness. It is consequently morally impossible that He should hear the prayers of those who supplicate Him that He would grant unto them that they may see their sins in all the enormity. What we are to pray to God for, in reference to a sight and sense of our sins, is that we may see them in their aggravation so far as we are able to bear the sight, and that we may be led to prize the Saviour more for his redeeming love than we have ever done before.

I have thus briefly adverted to the teaching of the Holy Spirit with relation to the Father, to the Son, and to Himself, and to the spiritual nature of God's people. Let me now say one or two words respecting the attributes of the Holy Ghost's tuition.

The Spirit teaches believers *perfectly*. I do not say that the knowledge which he imparts is perfect as to degree. That cannot be predicated of the Holy Ghost's teaching in this world: nor, indeed, will it be in the world to come; for it will be one great feature of the heavenly state, that the glorified saints will ever be increasing in their knowledge of divine things through all eternity. But though the teaching of the Spirit is not perfect, in this sense, either now, or ever will be hereafter, it is perfect in this—that all that is necessary for us in our present state to know, will be imparted to us by the Holy Ghost. God's people have an unction from the Holy One whereby they know all things—"all things," so far as is needful for their edification, their comfort in grace, and their progress in the divine life. And Jesus himself, immediately before He left the world, explicitly, emphatically, and repeatedly, assured His disciples that the Comforter who was to come and take His place, would teach them all things. "But," says He, in the twenty-sixth verse of the fourteenth chapter of the Gospel of John, "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name,

He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." And in the thirteenth verse of the sixteenth chapter, Jesus tells his disciples, that the Holy Spirit, when He should come, would lead them into all truth: "Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear that shall He speak: and He will shew you things to come." And very wondrous, under this blessed tuition, has been the progress which many of the saints of God have made in the knowledge of divine things. There has been a length and breadth, a height and depth, in their spiritual knowledge which has been the source of surprise, as well as of holy joy, to themselves. The instruction which has been thus imparted by the Holy Ghost, has been perfect as regarded their knowledge of their duty towards God and man, and so far also as related to their comfort and to the accomplishment of that measure of sanctification, which God decreed, from all eternity, should be wrought in them.

The teaching of the Holy Ghost is *infallible*

teaching. Believers frequently adopt erroneous opinions, and there are often grievous errors in their conduct and conversation ; but errors, either in principle or practice, are in no case the result of the Holy Spirit's tuition. He cannot err. He is infallible, and so are all His teachings. He is called the Spirit of truth. Whatever errors the believer has to deplore, whether in heart or in life, are the results of the darkness in which his understanding is enshrouded, and of the corruption which still clings to his nature. On the other hand, whatever correct spiritual knowledge the people of God possess, they owe it all to the teaching of the Holy Ghost. It is the Spirit, and He alone that reveals the truth. "The natural man receiveth not the things of God, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned ;" that is, they are made manifest to the mind by the tuition of the Holy Spirit, The sinner never can savingly call Jesus, Lord, but as he is taught and enabled to do so by the Holy Ghost. And as all spiritual truth is imparted by the Third Person of the Trinity, both to the sinner before his conversion, and to the believer after he has been born again,—so what-

ever the Spirit teaches is truth, all truth, and only truth. The teachings of the most experienced of God's people have invariably a greater or less amount of error mingled with the truth. Not so with the Spirit's tuition. He teaches nothing but the truth. His instruction is infallible. He is, as already remarked, the Spirit of all truth. Blessed Teacher ! What believer does not desire to resign himself yet more unreservedly to His unerring tuition ?

The Holy Ghost is also an *effectual* teacher. He never undertakes the task of enlightening the darkened mind, or of instructing the ignorant, without accomplishing His purpose. Where the Holy Spirit begins the work of spiritual illumination, He never relinquishes it until it is crowned with success. He triumphs in His own time, and in His own way. The darkness in which the mind on which He has commenced His illuminating operations, was enveloped, is sure, sooner or later, to be dispelled. An entrance is effected through which His own bright beams shine into the soul. Ignorance gives place to knowledge, and he who is the happy subject of the tuition of the Divine Agent, begins to form correct views

of all things connected with the way of salvation, which it is essential for him to know. While without the accompanying aid of the Holy Spirit, all the learning and wisdom of man, in the world, though brought to bear directly on the mind of the sinner, could never effectually or savingly teach him the great truths connected with the Gospel scheme, — the Spirit of God never yet failed, and never, in the nature of things, can fail to impart instruction effectually, or in its saving results, to any single mind, however darkened by grievous error or blinded by sin, in which He has commenced the gracious work of tuition. In the process of enlightening and instructing, the Holy Ghost operates with the same resistless effect as in the work of conversion. In either case it is with “demonstration of the Spirit and of power.” In either case, also, it is—“For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power”—in resistless power—and “in the Holy Ghost and in much assurance.” That assurance was the fruit of the Holy Ghost’s effectual teaching of the church at Thessalonica.

Such, then, are the things that the Holy Spirit teaches, and such are the attributes of His teach-

ing. What a mercy, as has just been remarked, to have such a Teacher ! How the believer ought increasingly to prize, as every succeeding day passes away, the Divine Teacher himself and the instruction He imparts ; and how earnest, how frequent, how persevering ought we all to be in our supplications at the throne of the heavenly grace, that we may be brought under the exclusive and habitual tuition of God's Holy Spirit.

CHAPTER VII.

THE HOLY SPIRIT AS A SANCTIFIER.

WE now approach the consideration of another character which the Holy Spirit sustains, in reference to all believers in Christ; and a most blessed character it is. I allude to His being the **SANCTIFIER** of all God's people.

Though the people of God are, in a measure, sanctified when they are converted to Christ, yet they soon discover, from their painful experience, that the work of sanctification has only been partially accomplished. They have still their daily and hourly conflicts to carry on with the corruption which still remains within them. This severe and incessant conflict between corruption in the heart, and the operation of God's grace, is forcibly and affectingly described in Paul's seventh chapter to the Romans. And the greater the progress which the believer has made in the Divine

life, the more sensibly will he be alive to the arduous nature of the conflict which he has to maintain with corruptions within,—all the more fiercely and skilfully assailing him because marshalled and led on to the battle by the great enemy of God and His people. Satan takes a special pleasure, and puts forth all his subtlety and power, in harassing those of God's people who have been taught by the Holy Spirit, to approach the nearest in resemblance to the Divine image. This is made most explicit, from all that we read of the most eminent saints whose experiences are recorded for our instruction and benefit in either of the two Testaments. Was there ever any one so tempted, so tried, so harassed by Satan as Job? Every corruption that still remained in his heart was stirred up in opposition to God, and made an instrument whereby to increase a misery already intolerably great. Job was deeply sensible of this. He felt his depravity to be extreme. "Behold," says he, addressing God, "I am vile. I will lay my hand on my mouth." "I have heard of Thee," still addressing God, in the forty-second chapter, and fifth and sixth verses, "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye

seeth Thee, wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes." The Psalmist, too, makes many most affecting complaints of the power of indwelling sin within him. He was constrained to confess, that iniquities prevailed against him. To the experience of Paul we need not make any reference in addition to the one already made. All his epistles are full of humbling admissions of the prevalence of corruption within him, and the consequent unceasing and arduous conflict which he had to maintain with the law of his members, which warred against the law of his mind. And no one felt more sensibly than he, the indispensable need he hourly had of the aid of the Holy Spirit to enable him to conquer his corruptions, and to become more and more conformed to the image of God.

To sanctify the believer in soul, body, and spirit, and thus meeten him for eternal glory, is the peculiar province of the Holy Ghost. Not only is He called the *Holy* Spirit, the *Holy* Ghost, and the Spirit of *Holiness*, in virtue of His own essential and perfect purity, but because of that holiness which He produces and promotes, and ultimately will perfect in the hearts of all believers. Jesus

promised to His disciples when about to leave them, that He would send the Spirit to them in the capacity of a Sanctifier, for the furtherance of their holiness as well as for their enjoying that comfort which was the necessary result of showing them the things of Christ, and of bringing all things to their remembrance whatsoever Jesus had said unto them. He was moreover promised by Christ, as the Spirit that would lead them unto all truth. And it is of the very essence of Gospel truth that it sanctifies those who have discerned and embraced it. Jesus emphatically and explicitly recognizes this great truth when He prays the Father, that He would sanctify His disciples through God's truth, adding, "Thy Word is truth."

It is essential alike to the safety and happiness of God's people here on earth that they should be a holy people,—not perfectly so, inasmuch as that is impossible while they bear about with them a corrupt nature, but relatively so. They are not to rest satisfied with those attainments which they may have already made in sanctification, but they must pray, and struggle, and strive to grow in holiness, till the last hour of their earthly exist-

ence. It is God's will that His people should all make marked and steady progress in holiness. Hence the injunction, direct from His own lips, "Be ye holy, for I am holy." And Jesus says, "Be ye perfect even as your Father in heaven is perfect." All the prophets and apostles proclaim in one voice, and in emphatic language, that the saints of God must grow in grace, which in this case is synonymous with holiness. For this purpose the Holy Spirit has been provided. As has already, in substance, been remarked, it is one of His leading offices, perhaps we ought rather to say *the* leading office, to promote the work of sanctification in the soul. His agency in this great work is everywhere distinctly recognized in the Word of God. But it is not necessary that we should give numerous proofs of the fact. One or two will be enough. We are told that the love of God is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost; and the love of God, every one will admit, is the great source or fountain of all true holiness, whether in heart or in life. The doctrine of the Holy Ghost being the grand agent of sanctification in the minds and hearts of believers, is fully and clearly set forth in the eighth chapter to the

Romans. In the very first verse we are told that there is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus,—of which blessed fact the great proof is to be found in the circumstance of not walking after the flesh, but after the Spirit. Walking after the Spirit is eminently a proof of being sanctified by the Holy Ghost. From the second till the fourteenth verse of the chapter, there is a continuous and cogent argument to show that all believers are placed under obligations of the most binding kind, to walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. “For,” says the apostle, “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity

against God : for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin ; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die : but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.”

All this is an earnest and impressive effort to induce the believer to follow after that holiness, without which no man can see the Lord, in connection with the Almighty power of the Holy Spirit in producing and promoting it. In the fifteenth verse of the same chapter, there is also a clear though indirect unfolding of the sanctifying

agency of the Spirit on the minds of all believers : “ For ye have not,” says the apostle, “ received the spirit of bondage again to fear ; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.” As God is essentially holy, no sinner could approach Him in the filial spirit here described, who had not first been sanctified by the Holy Ghost, and by Him made conscious of his adoption into the family of God. The sinner who has never been sanctified by the Spirit, not only could not approach a Being who is of “ purer eyes than to behold iniquity,” but he never could look up to God as his Father, in that special and blessed sense which is here indicated. Indeed, the very next verse is decisive on this point ; for, says the apostle, “ The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God,” —an expression which necessarily implies that the work of sanctification has been accomplished in the souls of all of whom this can be predicated. Let me here take the opportunity, by way of parenthesis, which I gladly do, of commending to the special attention of my readers Dr. Winslow’s able and luminous exposition of the whole of this chapter—perhaps the most precious one in

the whole compass of Divine truth,—which he has given in his well-known work, “NO CONDEMNATION.” The volume is an invaluable treatise on the momentous truths contained in the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans.

In the sixteenth verse of the fifteenth chapter of the same Epistle to the Romans, Paul distinctly and directly asserts the doctrine of the believer's sanctification through the Holy Spirit. “That I should,” he says, “be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.” And the same apostle, in the thirteenth verse of the second chapter of his Second Epistle to the Thessalonians, emphatically recognizes the obligations under which he and his fellow-workers in the ministry of the Gospel were, to give God thanks for having chosen them to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief in the truth: “But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth.” Peter has a passage which

is in some respects parallel, in the first and second verses of the first chapter of his First Epistle : “ Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ : Grace unto you, and peace be multiplied.” And the same truth is reiterated in the twenty-second verse of the same chapter : “ Seeing,” he says, “ ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently.” Many other passages might be cited in confirmation of the doctrine that the Holy Spirit is the great sanctifier of God’s people, but it is one on which all who have embraced evangelical views are so entirely agreed—that it is not necessary, as before remarked, to adduce any further corroborative passages from the pages of inspiration.

The holy and blessed results which spring from the indwelling of the Spirit in the heart of the believer in His office of Sanctifier, are described

by the apostle Paul in his Epistle to the Galatians, in these words:—"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, goodness, gentleness, faith, meekness, temperance." These are all holy dispositions, produced by an Agent who is holiness itself. The same apostle in his subsequent epistle, again speaks of the fruits of the Spirit: "For," says he, "the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth, proving what is acceptable unto the Lord." So that the very results wrought on the minds of believers, by the Spirit of God, as clearly prove by implication, as it is directly proved by specific statements, that the Holy Ghost is the Sanctifier of God's people. Every good disposition felt by believers—every aspiration after a higher standard of spiritual excellence than they have yet attained unto—every earnest wish, every fervent prayer to be more conformed to the will of God,—and every sincere effort to make further progress in the pathway of holiness,—is to be ascribed solely to the operations of the Divine Spirit.

And in order that He may successfully carry on the work of sanctification in God's saints, the Holy Ghost takes up his residence in their hearts.

In accordance with this view of the indwelling of the Spirit in the souls of the saints, Paul calls them temples of the Holy Ghost. And everywhere the exhortation is given to God's people, that they should seek the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in a yet more marked and manifest manner, while the fact is stated in innumerable places, that the Spirit *does* dwell in the hearts of believers. "Even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him; but ye know Him because He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." "But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth within you." The Spirit of God cannot dwell in any heart without making that heart comparatively holy. Were it possible—which, blessed be God, it is not, for the Holy Spirit is omnipotent,—that the Spirit could be defeated in His efforts to sanctify the soul which He chooses for His dwelling-place, He would at once, and finally, depart from that soul; for, in the very nature of things, there never could be any communion, any association, between a Being

like the Spirit of God, and the sinner who could successfully resist His sanctifying operations in the soul. The Holy Spirit, whenever He takes up His residence in the heart of man, purifies that heart to such an extent, as to make it a suitable residence for Himself to dwell in.

The Holy Spirit, as the Sanctifier of the people of God, is frequently set before us in the sacred oracles under the emblem of water. Water cleanses, water washes away that which is polluted. And, therefore, the Holy Spirit is fitly compared to that element, inasmuch as He is the great Sanctifier of all who believe. Under this emblem of water, the Holy Spirit, as a Sanctifier of the saints, is spoken of in various places in the Old Testament. "Then," says God himself, speaking through the mouth of the prophet Ezekiel, in the twenty-fifth, twenty-sixth, and twenty-seventh verses of the thirty-sixth chapter of his book, "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean : from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you : and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.

And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them."

All this is spoken of the Holy Spirit. It was to be His work, as is clearly shown in the twenty-seventh verse, where God says, "I will put my Spirit within you." This passage furnishes an impressive illustration of the sanctifying agency of the Spirit of God in the minds and hearts of believers.

The Spirit is again spoken of in a very remarkable manner, under the emblem of water, in the thirty-eighth and thirty-ninth verses of the seventh chapter of John's Gospel, where Jesus himself says: "He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified."

With regard to the mode of the operation of the Holy Spirit on the hearts of men, when carrying on and carrying out the work of sanctification, it is not necessary that we should dwell at any length. In general terms the Spirit of God sanctifies the saints through the truth as it is in Jesus.

“Now,” says Jesus, addressing His earthly disciples previous to His crucifixion, “now ye are clean,” or sanctified, “through the word that I have spoken unto you.” In another place, in addressing His heavenly Father on behalf of His disciples, for whom He felt at that memorable moment a special solicitude, He says: “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy Word is truth.” No soul was ever yet sanctified through any other medium than the Word of God. It is the only medium of sanctification which God is pleased to honour. Providences, it is true, are sometimes made the preliminary means both of conversion and sanctification; but that is always in ultimate subordination to the truth as it is in Jesus. A solemn dispensation of Providence may strike the mind, and arrest the attention of those who had hitherto been thoughtless; but still it will invariably be found, that wherever saving results are produced, the Word of God has been the main instrument employed. The loss of property, of friends, of health, or other dispensations of Divine Providence, may, and often do, predispose the mind for the reception of the truth; but still it is by the Word that the Spirit of God savingly and sanctifyingly works. In seasons of sickness or of

sorrow, when the mind is solemnized, and the heart is deeply affected, the Spirit of God brings particular portions of the holy oracles, with a special power, to the soul that is thus exercised. David speaks to this effect with great force and frequency, because his utterances came from the depths of his personal experience.

The Holy Spirit is not limited with regard to the revealed truths which He makes the means of the sanctification of God's people. He worketh in this respect, where, and as He will. He employs one particular truth in the case of some particular saint, and another truth in the case of some other believer. But, generally speaking, there are certain truths which He specially owns and honours, and blesses, in the work of sanctification. Of these, indeed, it may be said that they are more or less largely made use of in the case of every saint who is sanctified by the Holy Ghost. The character of *God*,—as a God of infinite love and purity, is vividly brought before the believer as one grand medium of his progress in holiness. The perfect purity of the Almighty is presented to the believer's mind by the Spirit, in colours so vivid, that he admires and adores it, and feels that it not

only is his duty, but would be his highest privilege to be conformed to the Divine image.' Whatever we love and admire, we long to be made like unto. And so with regard to the love of God towards His people,—the more clearly that is apprehended, and the more sensibly its power is felt on the heart, the more will the believer long to love and be like so gracious and so loving a Being. Those who have thus contemplated the glorious and gracious character of God, will be able fully to feel the force of the passage—"We love Him because He first loved us." And in our love to God as the result of a consciousness of being loved by a Being so pure and so gracious as He is, there will be found the elements of all true holiness.

In the *character, too, and example of Christ*, there is something which exercises a wondrously transforming power. When the Holy Spirit brings before the mind of the believer the boundless love of Christ to a ruined race, and to himself as one of the number, and portrays with His own matchless power the holiness of Jesus, the soul is filled with an unutterable admiration, which seeks to give all the expression to its feelings which it can, by hungering and thirsting after,

and praying for conformity to His image. The great truth—one of the most momentous truths embraced in the glorious Gospel scheme—that the blood of Christ is meant, and is infallibly fitted to cleanse from all sin, is perpetually present to the mind, and its sanctifying effect is sensibly felt on the heart. By constantly keeping before the eye of faith, the blood, and the character, and example of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit carries on the work of transformation in the soul of the saint, with steady and manifest effect. Thus taught, and thus operated on by the Holy Ghost, the believer feels a force and sees a fulness of meaning he never did before, in the passage in the eighteenth verse of the third chapter of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, which says:—“ But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

But in speaking of Christ as being one great source, as being indeed *the* great source, in the hands of the Divine Spirit, of the sanctification of God's saints, every believer will concur with me when I seek to lay special stress on the *blood* of

Jesus as the great means of sanctification made use of by the Holy Ghost. All the shedding of blood under the Jewish dispensation, was no less typical of the soul-sanctifying, than the sin-expiating efficacy of the Saviour's blood. Not only did the blood of bulls and of goats and the other beasts slain on the altar, point to the atonement which Christ Jesus was to make on Mount Calvary, when His own most precious blood should be shed there, but it was no less expressively emblematic of the soul-cleansing power of that precious blood. By faith the believing Jew washed himself in the Redeemer's blood, and under the direction and by the aid of the Holy Spirit was made clean. In the ninth chapter of his Epistle to the Hebrews, the apostle dwells at much length, and with great emphasis, on this. He shows how the shedding of blood, under the Levitical dispensation, typified the shedding of Christ's blood for the purpose of sanctifying God's people, as well as for expiating the guilt of all who should believe in Jesus. Without quoting the whole chapter, which bears more or less directly on this point, let me invite the special and prayerful attention of my readers to that por-

tion of the chapter which begins at the eighth and ends with the twenty-second verse: "The Holy Ghost," says the apostle, "this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing: which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation. But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this cause He is the

mediator of the New Testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead : otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth. Whereupon neither the first testament was dedicated without blood. For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people, saying, This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you. Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry. And almost all things are by the law purged with blood ; and without shedding of blood is no remission."

In the apocalyptic visions, too, of John, in his solitary abode on the Isle of Patmos, the blood of Jesus Christ in its all-sanctifying efficacy seems to have been perpetually present to that apostle's mind. He begins his revelations with

an ascription of glory to the Redeemer. "Unto Him," he saith in the first chapter and in verses fifth and sixth, "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." And in the fourteenth verse of the seventh chapter, pointing to the ransomed and glorified multitude that no one could number, whom he saw in a vision, he said, "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." So that not only is the blood of Christ the great means of the believer's sanctification, but without its application to the heart and conscience by the Holy Ghost, there can be no real sanctification at all. It is clearly to the blood of Christ in its sanctifying virtues, though speaking under the emblem of water, that the apostle refers in the twenty-second verse of the tenth chapter of Hebrews. "Let us," he says, "draw near," namely, to the throne of mercy in prayer, "with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure

water.” That the water here spoken of means the blood of Jesus in all its soul-cleansing power, is placed beyond all doubt by the context, where, in verses nineteen and twenty, the apostle says, “ Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh.” The same great central truth in the Gospel scheme, namely, that the chief source of the believer’s sanctification is the blood of Christ when applied to the heart and conscience by the Holy Ghost, is further set forth in the twenty-eighth and twenty-ninth verses of the same tenth chapter. “ He that despised Moses’ law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?” In the thirteenth chapter and twelfth verse the precious truth is repeated. “ Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate.” And yet again, in the same

chapter, in the twentieth and twenty-first verses, is distinctly enunciated the doctrine that the saints are sanctified by the blood of Christ, called in this instance by the apostle, "the blood of the covenant." "Now," he says, "the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen." In the verse in the first chapter of Peter's First Epistle, recently quoted, there is a striking statement of the truth that believers are sanctified by the Spirit, through the blood of Christ. "Elect," says the apostle, "according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied." Need I quote on this subject what is said by the apostle John in the first chapter of his First Epistle and seventh verse: "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin."

The Holy Ghost also carries on the work of

sanctification in the souls of God's saints, by the blessed views which He gives them of *Himself*. He clearly reveals to them that He is a *Holy* Spirit. He presents Himself to them as the Spirit of *Holiness*, and manifests Himself to them as dwelling permanently in their hearts, according to the promise of Jesus that He would abide with them for ever. They had before felt their infinite obligations to the Spirit of God for His convincing power previous to conversion, and for the almighty power which He graciously put forth when He accomplished the great work of their regeneration. And thus feeling in relation to the past, and conscious that every holy desire and good disposition which they experience within, is wholly and solely the fruit of the Holy Spirit's operations, they feel their hearts drawn out in love to the Spirit, which love is an eminent source of sanctity. There is thus a close and constant communion established between the soul of the saint and the Holy Spirit, the natural result of which is, that the saint longs and labours to be holy, so as that his heart may be a suitable temple for the Spirit of God to dwell in.

But the Holy Spirit further carries on the work

of sanctification in the souls of the saints, by the increasingly vivid views which He brings before them of the *evil of sin, and of the enormity of their own individual guilt*. The Spirit lets in a continually flowing flood of light on the spirituality of the law of God, which no one, not wrought on by His irresistible agency, ever could discern. He reveals to them that sin is an infinite evil, inasmuch as it is committed against an infinitely holy and gracious God. And as the best of all places at which to learn the terrible enormity of sin, the Spirit conducts them to the cross of Christ, and points to the agony, the ignominy, and the death of the Saviour, as the most conclusive proofs which even God himself could furnish, of the unutterable evil of sin. Then the Holy Ghost presses home on the believer's conscience the greatness of his own individual guilt. He shows him as in a mirror, faithfully reflecting the sins of his heart and his life, how great the aggravations of his guilt have been: and the result is that he is deeply humbled before God. He lays his hand on his mouth, and his mouth in the dust, and from the depths of his troubled heart exclaims, "Unclean, unclean am I!" And when

the believer sees himself in this light, the work of sanctification is, beyond all question, already far advanced, and a foundation is laid for yet farther and more decided progress in the Divine life. Under such feelings, and with such views of himself, the Christian is constrained to have daily recourse to the "fountain filled with blood," drawn from the veins of the Redeemer,—the fountain spoken of in Old Testament Scripture as that which is opened to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness. He abhors sins which he formerly loved. He turns away with horror from whatever would offend so holy and good a God, as he now sees the Father to be, or as would crucify his glorious Lord afresh, or grieve that Holy Spirit to whose agency he feels that he owes all that he is, both with regard to his conversion and whatever measure of attainment he has already made in that holiness without which no man can see the Lord, and of which he longs to obtain a far larger share.

These are the principal means, and this the usual process by which the Holy Spirit carries on the work of sanctification in the souls of the saints.

It may be right to repeat, that the Spirit does not bind Himself down to any specific course of procedure. He worketh as He will. He searcheth all hearts. He knoweth all things, and adapts Himself to the peculiar circumstances of each believer. Still it is by means, in some form or other, of those cardinal truths which we have thus sought to indicate, that He carries on, and will ultimately complete, the work of sanctification in the souls of God's people. The work, it is true, must needs, from the nature of things, be more or less imperfect even in the best of believers, so long as they are in the body; but the believer will be made perfect in holiness for ever the moment the soul, severed from the body, has winged its flight to those realms of unsullied purity and unutterable bliss, in which all Christ's ransomed people shall exult in the effulgence of God's glorious presence, and bask in the sunshine of His gracious favour, through all eternity.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE HOLY GHOST AS A COMFORTER.

WE now come to that part of our subject which is to be regarded as its great central point, namely, the Holy Spirit considered as the COMFORTER of the saints of God. Our previous chapters are chiefly to be viewed as paving the way for the more clear apprehension of the great fact, that the Holy Spirit is specially given by God, and specially sent by Christ, in the character of the COMFORTER of the saints.

The people of God stand in urgent and unceasing need of Divine comfort. They not only live in a world of woe, and have their full share of the sorrows which are common to humanity, but they have troubles to which the people of the world are strangers. Hence, we are told, that many are the afflictions of the righteous. While they are deeply depressed, and seem to languish beneath their load of grief, as if they would perish under it,

they see the wicked around them flourish like the green bay tree. Their journey through life lies, in a special sense, through a vale of tears. The very frequency and emphasis with which they say to their souls, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul?" shows that they are deeply depressed. They emphatically sow in tears while pilgrims on their way to that better land where they shall reap in unbounded and eternal joy. Their Lord and Master prepared them for this: "In the world ye shall have tribulation;" "Whoever will be my disciple must take up his cross and follow me;" "Ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake." And the hatred of the world, it need not be remarked, involves opposition and persecution in every variety of form. The people of God have to fight every inch of their way to heaven. In front, on either side, and from behind, they have to do battle with the powers of darkness and with ungodly men. And as they successively reach the realms of glory, and take a retrospective survey of the scenes of sorrow through which they have passed, they see a fulness of truth and of meaning in the language applied to the ransomed throng which they never discerned when on

earth :—"These are they who have come out of *great tribulation.*" The chief sorrows of the saints spring from sources unknown to, and incomprehensible by, the world. They are the sorrows of the soul,—having their origin in the vivid views which they have of the evil of sin and of their own individual guiltiness in the sight of God. And the sins which grieve them most, which cause them the deepest anguish of spirit, are the sins which they have committed since they realized a sense of God's pardoning mercy and adopting love in Christ Jesus their Lord. But as I have touched on this point already, I will not recur to it. Suffice it to say, that the believer's path is everywhere beset with thorns. The road along which he passes on his journey towards his home in heaven, is so rugged, as well as perilous, that he often faints by the way, and frequently fears he will one day perish, and never reach the celestial Canaan. He has therefore need of all the comfort which can be given him on the road to heaven. It is God's pleasure that His people should be comforted, as will be shown hereafter. It is no less the pleasure of our Lord, that the hearts of His followers should not be unduly

troubled, but should be comforted amid all their tribulations. It was with this view, and to this end, that He promised them, when on earth, to send them the Holy Ghost as their COMFORTER.

But if the Holy Ghost were, as many maintain, not a person, but a mere impalpable "influence," He would indeed be a miserable Comforter, or rather no Comforter at all, to the sorrowing children of God. They need, and must have something tangible, something sentient, something possessing all the attributes of a wise, and holy, and powerful Being, to minister comfort to them in their days of deep distress. To talk to a tried believer of receiving comfort from the Holy Ghost, regarded as a mere "influence," would be to him a painful mockery. And so with regard to the Divinity of the Holy Spirit. If He were in any way less than the other two Persons in the Godhead; if He were what some make Him, in effect a sort of subordinate deity, He could never efficiently fulfil the functions of a Comforter, for to do that, essential Divinity is indispensable. But the saints of God know that the Holy Ghost is truly and properly equal in His essence with the Father and the Son. They feel besides, that one who

loves them so tenderly as Jesus does, would never have sent them a Comforter as a substitute for Himself, who did not possess all the qualifications necessary for the office,—of which qualifications, the most important one is, the perfect Divinity of the Comforter to be sent. It is mainly on this ground that I have dwelt at so much length on the Personality and entire Deity of the Holy Spirit.

With regard, again, to the chapters which I have devoted to the consideration of the Holy Ghost, as the convincer and converter of sinners,—no true believer needs to be informed that there can be no real scriptural comfort until the work of conversion, and the process of conviction which precedes it, have been accomplished. The Holy Ghost never yet acted the part, and never will, of Comforter to any person in whose mind He had not previously made His power felt, in the two processes referred to. Not less indispensable to the Holy Spirit's fulfilling the functions of the Comforter in the minds and hearts of the saints, is instruction in Divine things. So long as any one remains in ignorance of the more important truths which are contained in the Bible,

He must remain a stranger to the comfort of the Holy Ghost. The Spirit must teach not only the outward form of words, but their hidden and spiritual meaning, before the soul can experience any real comfort. The same holds equally true with regard to sanctification. Holiness is the basis of all real happiness. An unholy and yet happy man, would be a contradiction. It were a spiritual impossibility. Many truly holy men have in seasons of darkness and temptation, been unhappy for a time, but sooner or later the clouds which enveloped their souls have broken up, and disappeared, and they have again known what real happiness is. But for a man to be habitually unholy, and yet happy, is a thing which not only never was witnessed, but, with all reverence be it said, is a thing which even God himself could not bring to pass,—inasmuch as it would destroy the very foundations of that throne of glory which He has established in the central spot of his illimitable universe. The Holy Ghost, therefore, before discharging the duties which devolve upon Him as a Comforter, effectually performs the functions which attach to His character as the sanctifier of God's people.

Having, then, thus considered the Person and the Work of the Holy Spirit, before He assumes the office of Comforter, and having shown that unless our views, as relates to His person and work, are sound, He cannot prove a Comforter to any one,—we now come to the chief object we have in view, which is to consider the Holy Ghost as **THE COMFORTER**. This is the most blessed relationship which the Holy Spirit bears to the saints of God. May He himself lead us into all truth respecting His ministrations as a Comforter, and may every poor, discouraged, cast-down believer, whose eye, in God's providence, may be directed to the perusal of this work, abundantly experience the blessedness of truths so precious as those which cluster around the glorious and gracious truth that the Spirit is the Comforter of the people of God.

In directing attention to the **MEANS** by which the Holy Ghost ministers comfort to the followers of Christ, it is right that we should, first of all, receive the instruction which Jesus himself has given us, direct from His own lips, on the point.

It will be remembered, that when He first gave the promise to His followers, that He would send

them, or pray the Father to send them, the Holy Ghost as a Comforter, it was immediately before His crucifixion. It will be noted, that first of all the Holy Ghost was to be given as a successor to Himself, so far as related to the comfort of His disciples, whose hearts were naturally troubled at the thought of being parted from Him. "I will," says Jesus, "pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever." Jesus himself had hitherto been the sole Comforter of His disciples. Of the Holy Spirit as a Comforter, it may be doubted whether they had, up till this time, any distinct or intelligible views. That they had a certain amount of knowledge respecting the Holy Spirit, and were not consequently in the condition of those alluded to in the Acts, who did not so much as know whether there were any Holy Ghost, is sufficiently plain from what afterwards fell from Jesus; for in the verse which follows that which has just been quoted, He says: "Ye know Him, for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." But the knowledge of the disciples with respect to the Holy Spirit, must have been very greatly increased by the few words which their Lord, on

this occasion, spoke to them regarding Him. And the more they knew of Him, the greater of necessity would be the measure of their comfort. Even the simple intimation made to them, that the Holy Ghost was to come as the successor of Christ, or in His stead, so far as related to their comfort, in other words, that the Holy Spirit should be *another* Comforter, must have ministered largely to their happiness. The depths of their grief at the impending loss of the presence of their Lord, whom they so tenderly loved, testified to the comfort which He had unfailingly afforded them, while yet with them. Accordingly, when they had Christ's own word for it, that the Holy Ghost should be sent as their Comforter, in His stead, they must have found in that simple fact, in conjunction with the assurance that He should abide with them for ever, an inexhaustible source of consolation. If they should thus have with them, and dwelling within them, such a Comforter, the comfort must have been instantaneous as well as abundant. It did not depend on their knowledge of the means which are destined to be hereafter employed to minister to their comfort. It was enough for them to know that

the Comforter, whom Christ was to send in His own place, would be a suitable and sufficient one. And even now the new-born babe in Christ, whose perceptions of Divine Truth may be very dim, with regard to other things, may derive, and ought to derive, consolation from the simple fact that He knows that he has received the Holy Ghost. And believers, too, of many years' standing in their discipleship to Christ, ought, in their darkest days, to fall back on the great fact of the indwelling of the Spirit within them, and extract abundant consolation from it. They have the greatest cause for joy, that God has not taken His Holy Spirit from them. So long as they have Him dwelling within them, they are safe. Nor ought they ever to lose their consolation or happiness, though they sometimes do, with such a glorious and gracious inmate in their hearts.

But let us direct our attention to the means of ministering comfort to God's people which Jesus himself indicated in his address to His disciples immediately before His ignominious and excruciating death. "He," says Jesus, speaking of the Holy Ghost, "He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever

I have said unto you.” It is evident here, as has been already remarked, that the Christian’s comfort or happiness is essentially dependent on the measure of spiritual instruction which has been imparted to him. The more the believer knows of the mysteries of divine things, the greater will be the amount of his happiness,—just as the perfection of knowledge in glory will be an essential element in heaven’s happiness through all eternity. If, therefore, Christian reader, you would obtain more comfort than you have hitherto done, seek first that the Holy Spirit may increase your knowledge of divine things. The more you know of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, the more will you love each of the several Persons of the glorious Trinity, and also the Three as a Triune God. And to have an increase of love to God, and to Christ, and to the Holy Spirit, is necessarily to insure an increase of happiness ; for happiness is as inevitably a consequence of love to a Triune Jehovah, as that any particular effect should spring from an adequate cause.

But Jesus lays special stress when giving the promise of the Comforter to His disciples, on the fact that when the Comforter came, He would

bring all things to their remembrance whatsoever He—their Lord—had said unto them. That was eminently calculated to comfort their souls in the circumstances in which they were about to be placed. By the time the Spirit was to descend upon them, their Lord would have left them for ever, so far as regarded any personal or visible communication with them. It is not difficult to imagine what must have been the depths of their distress, consequent on the bereavement which they sustained when their adorable Master, whom they loved with an intensity of affection of which we can form but a feeble conception, had been taken from them. When, therefore, the Holy Ghost had been received by them, and He brought all things to their remembrance whatsoever their Lord had said unto them, we can easily conceive with what joy of soul those things were thus brought anew by the Spirit to their recollection. All the words of endearment which Jesus spake to them, as man, while He sojourned with them, as well as the great spiritual truths which He taught them as a Divine Teacher, which would thus come afresh to their memories, would doubtless be brought to their minds with greater vivid-

ness than when first they fell on their ears from the lips of their loving Lord. And when thus brought anew to the remembrance of the disciples by the agency of the Holy Ghost, they would see a meaning as well as feel a blessedness in them, they had never seen or felt before. We have abundant proofs that the disciples were slow of hearing and dull of understanding. They often either misconceived the meaning of their Lord, or had no definite notions whatever as to what He said. This, we know, would not be the case when the Holy Ghost had come and taken possession of their hearts for the purpose of bringing all things to their remembrance whatsoever their Lord had said unto them. The Holy Spirit, as was shown in a previous chapter, is an effectual Teacher. He fully instructs the believer as far as it is necessary the believer should be instructed. When, therefore, He brought anew to the remembrance of the first disciples the things which Jesus had spoken to them, He would pour a flood of light into their minds and hearts, which would give them such perceptions of divine things, as would fill their souls with a joy unspeakable and full of glory. And the Holy Ghost would, too,

we may be sure, bring back to the remembrance of the first disciples, the loving looks, the tender accents, the affectionate manner of their Lord, when uttering the words thus brought anew to their memories, — with a blessedness of which none but themselves could form any idea.

- *All* the things which Jesus had spoken to His disciples previous to the period at which He delivered this most touching and tender address, were more or less adapted, when rightly understood, by the teaching of the Holy Ghost, and brought home by Him to the mind and heart, to minister comfort to the disconsolate disciples. But there were some things which Christ had said, which were peculiarly calculated to comfort their hearts. The Sermon on the Mount, when brought afresh to the minds of the disciples by the Holy Ghost, after Christ's crucifixion, would, of itself, prove a source of inexhaustible consolation to their souls. And so it ought to the soul of every believer of the present day. And so it will, if the Holy Ghost be only pleased to bring it vividly before the mind, and press it home with power to the heart. Only think, believer, in how many instances in that remarkable discourse, Jesus

pronounced His disciples to be blessed, and receive from it the comfort which it was intended to impart to His followers. Even in the act of obeying, or honestly endeavouring to obey, the moral precepts with which the Sermon on the Mount is so largely interspersed, there would, in the hands of the Holy Ghost, be found a surpassing pleasure,—a happiness which those only know who have sought in singleness of heart to do, in all things, the will of God. Let no one turn away from this as legal teaching. We have no right to separate the doctrine from the precept, when God has joined them together. To do so would be to contract the terrible guilt of those who are described at the close of Revelation as taking away from the words of that book. What is said of that one book, is by implication said with regard to all other parts of the Sacred volume. Those who would put aside the precept, either wholly or partially, or in any way lessen the importance of the place which it has in God's Word, must assuredly expose themselves to the fearful condemnation which is pronounced in the last verse but two of the Apocalypse. The very fact practically declares, that they who undervalue the pre-

ceptive parts of the Bible, are not, in the proper acceptation of the term, believers in that Scripture which says, that in the keeping of God's commandments there is great reward. David, the most advanced of all the Old Testament saints, was not afraid of acting in a spirit of legality when *he* was so earnest in his desires to act in accordance with the precept. "Oh," he says, addressing God, "how I love thy law ! It is my meditation all the day." In the same hundred and nineteenth Psalm—in every one of whose hundred and seventy-nine verses, save one, there is an expression of regard for God's moral and spiritual laws — David observes, "My heart breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy commandments." Elsewhere he says, in terms which have already been quoted once and again, that the Word of God was sweeter to his taste than honey and the honey-comb. And every saint of God, taught by the Holy Spirit, will view the preceptive parts of the Bible in the same light, and derive unspeakable comfort from them.

But to return to the things spoken verbally by Christ to His disciples, which the Holy Spirit, when He descended on them, should bring to

their remembrance, and thereby comfort their hearts. Of these we can only refer to a few, and they shall be taken exclusively from those chapters of John which record His address to His disciples immediately before His death. What could be more adapted, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, to minister comfort to the first disciples, than the four first verses of the fourteenth chapter of John? "Let not," says Jesus, "your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself: that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know."

It is easy to believe that when these words of Jesus were brought afresh to the minds of His first disciples, by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, they must have been filled with the highest joy. Jesus says, "Let not your heart be troubled." Why, then, should they be troubled? If He speaks peace, who shall speak the contrary? "In my Father's house," He adds, "there are

many mansions." As if He had said, "There is ample room for all of you in heaven ; and I go to prepare a place for you, individually, there. And having done this, having prepared a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am there ye may be also." What consoling words. It were impossible to conceive of any that could be more so. Jesus having prepared a place for all His disciples, would come again and receive them to that place. It is inexpressibly blessed to observe, that not only does Jesus prepare the place, but He prepares it where He himself is : " I will receive you to Myself, that where I am there ye may be also." He knew full well that however great might be the glory of heaven, it would be no place of real bliss to them, should they have their place assigned them in any part of the celestial regions where He was not. It is His presence that will give heaven its highest happiness. And as, without Him who redeemed them by His blood, the ransomed throng would not find heaven to be a place of perfect bliss, so without them, the happiness of Christ himself would not—I say it with all reverence—be complete. As it is His presence that makes them

supremely blessed, so their presence is essential to His happiness, in His mediatorial or representative capacity. "Father, I WILL that those whom thou hast given Me, may be with Me." They are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones, and therefore the head could not be happy, were not the members with it. This is a precious truth. It may prove sweet to the soul of many a saint to whom the idea never occurred before,—that Jesus, as the Elder Brother of all who believe in Him, could not be perfectly happy in heaven, were any of them missing from those mansions in glory which He has gone to prepare for them. This was eminently one of the things which Jesus had said to His first disciples, which the Holy Ghost would bring powerfully home to their sorrowing souls, and which, when thus brought to their remembrance, could not fail to fill their hearts with comfort and with joy.

In the thirteenth and fourteenth verses of the fourteenth chapter, Jesus employed other precious words, which would minister unspeakable comfort to the disciples, when the Holy Ghost brought them to their remembrance. "Whatsoever," He says, "ye shall ask in My name, that will I

do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in My name, I will do it." How sweet to the souls of the first disciples, must have been this assurance. How blessed to know that there was not a single thing which they could ask, which it was for their good to receive, and God's glory to give, which their Lord, after His ascension, would not bestow upon them. When the Holy Spirit brought these blessed words back to their memories, and impressed them on their hearts, they must have joyed and rejoiced to a degree of which we can form no adequate idea. And Christ's disciples of the present day ought to extract the same comfort from the same gracious words, for they are just as much meant for them, and are as applicable to their circumstances, as they were meant for, and were applicable to, the circumstances of those disciples who first became followers of the Lord. And wherever the Holy Spirit does bring home these words of Jesus to the hearts of His present disciples, they will find them a source of abundant consolation.

So profound was the solicitude of Jesus for the comfort of His disciples, that He repeats, in the eighteenth verse, the assurance He had given them

in the third, that He would come again unto them : “ I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to you.” This may either refer to His coming to them in the person of the Holy Ghost, or His coming to them on the morning of the resurrection, to receive them to Himself, that they might be for ever with Him in glory. Or the words may admit of both constructions. Either interpretation, or both interpretations would, when the words were brought to their remembrance by the Holy Ghost, prove the means of abundant consolation to their hearts.

Blessed, too, to the minds of the first disciples of Jesus, must have been the words in the following verse, when brought anew to their memories by the Holy Ghost. “ Because I live, ye shall live also.” The life here referred to, is spiritual and eternal life. In the life of their Lord, they had a guarantee or pledge of theirs. As His was imperishable, so would be that of His followers. Their life is hid with Christ in God, and can no more be extinguished than Jesus can cease to be. He is their head, they are the members of His mystical body, and, therefore, their spiritual and eternal life is as assured as that of their Lord

himself. This is a most blessed truth, and may be as much predicated of believers in Christ now, as it was of those to whom Jesus personally addressed it. Let us all, then, hold so precious a truth with a tenacity of grasp which neither Satan nor the world will be able to relax. It is a truth on which to live, it is a truth on which to die. It is fitted to solace and support the soul amid all the sorrows of life ; it is one eminently calculated to sustain and cheer in the hour and article of death.

When Jesus said to His first disciples that the Holy Ghost, whom He should send to them in the capacity of the Comforter, would bring all things to their remembrance whatsoever He had said unto them, His words did not literally relate alone to those which He had spoken before that particular moment. In the phrase He included what He was then saying to them, and what He might yet say before He had bowed His head and given up the ghost. All, therefore, which He said in the remaining part of the fourteenth chapter, and all that is recorded in the fifteenth and sixteenth chapters, were among the things which the Holy Spirit would convert into springs of comfort, by

bringing them again to the remembrance of the first followers of Jesus. It would far exceed the limits allotted to this part of my work, were I to make a detailed reference to all the blessed things which Christ then and there addressed to His disciples. The reader will find an ample reward in going over them all, word by word, and sentence by sentence, in his moments of seclusion from the world, and of his converse with the things of God and eternity. But there are some of our Saviour's words in these chapters so inexpressibly sweet to the believer's taste, that it is impossible not to fix the attention especially upon them. "Abide in Me, and I in you." "If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you." "As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you : continue ye in My love." "These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." "Henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth; but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of the Father, I

have made known to you.” “For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved Me, and believed that I came out from God.” And then listen to the precious words with which Jesus concludes His touching address to His disciples: “These things I have spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” No mind can conceive the magnitude of that comfort which these words of our Lord must have ministered to the minds of His first disciples, when the Holy Ghost, sent down from heaven for the special purpose, brought them anew to their remembrance. They would dwell on each word with ecstatic joy. They would see a meaning in, and derive a measure of consolation from, every sentence which their Saviour had spoken, which they would not exchange for all which this world could offer them instead. And the same words of our Lord ought to prove the source of the same comfort to all Christ’s followers of the present day. And so they will if they are only brought home with the resistless power of the Holy Ghost to our hearts. It is our duty to pray for the outpouring of the Spirit with this

view and to this end ; and if we do pray in faith, we have Christ's specific promise that we shall receive the Spirit : " For," says Jesus, " if ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more will the Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him."

Though many of the things which Jesus said unto His disciples while He was yet with them, are lost to us, yet it is inexpressibly blessed to know, that all those great truths which He taught in the days of His public ministry on earth, whether as relating to His character as mere man, or to His character as the God-man, are recorded in the New Testament. And believers, therefore, of the present day may be regarded as being, in a sense, in a similar situation to the first disciples. If we have not, like them, seen the person of our Lord, and listened to the accents of His voice, yet we know that in all essential respects what He spake to them, He speaks through His written Word to us. But we, like the first disciples, are apt to forget what Jesus has said, or, what we remember, we often fail to comprehend. The promise, therefore, of the Holy Ghost made to us, ought to minister as much comfort to our minds

as it did to theirs. We need to have our memories refreshed as to what we have read of the words of Jesus, and to have our minds enlightened, where they are dark.

But I am anxious to give a wider significance to the phrase, "He will bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you," than it might, on an inattentive perusal, seem to admit of. I would put a construction on it as broad as the boards of the Bible in which it is contained. As the Holy Scriptures, from Genesis to Revelation, are the acknowledged Word of God, and consequently the Word of Christ, I would regard every verse or passage in either Testament as legitimately included in the words of Jesus, when He says to His disciples of the present day, in promising them the gift of the Holy Spirit, "He will bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." Jesus spoke, and still speaks by the blood of righteous Abel, by the patriarchs, by the Levitical rites and ceremonies, by the Psalmist, and by the prophets, as well as in His own person, and by His disciples and apostles. We are, therefore, warranted in praying that all things which we read in God's Holy Book,

but which we may have forgotten, may be brought to our remembrance by the Holy Ghost, wherever they are calculated to minister comfort to our minds. And will not many a Christian reader readily and thankfully respond to my question in the affirmative, when I ask, "Has not the Holy Ghost, in times past, given you unspeakable comfort, by bringing to your remembrance many passages of Scripture not consisting of the words of Jesus as coming directly from His own lips?" Though they have come indirectly through the pen of some inspired servant, they have come with inexpressible blessedness and irresistible power.

Among the other things which the Comforter was to do when He came to the first disciples, and through which He would speak peace to their troubled hearts, was, that He should "testify" of Jesus. "When," says Christ, "the Comforter is come whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of Me." There can be no doubt that the disciples had up till the present time only seen as through a glass darkly, the glory of Christ's person; and they were so imper-

fectly informed regarding His mission to our earth, that Peter—doubtless expressing the sentiments of the rest, as well as his own—would not hear of His submitting to die a violent death: “This be far from thee, Lord.” And the two disciples, downcast and almost heart-broken, whom he met on their way to Emmaus, after He had risen from the dead, plainly intimated that all their faith in Him had been interred in the grave to which His body had been consigned. “We *thought* it would have been He that should have redeemed Israel.” They *had* thought this, but they thought it no longer. Thomas, who would not believe that the Lord had risen from the dead, unless he had positive proof of the fact, only expressed the doubts which the others entertained. The disciples of Jesus, therefore, had, it is manifest, no clear perceptions of His Divinity at the time of his death. But when the Spirit should be poured out without measure on them, the glorious truth of the proper and perfect Deity of the Lord Jesus would be made as clear to them as the sun when shining in his meridian splendour. And when this truth—a truth on which the whole scheme of redemption rests as on a foundation firmer far than the ever-

lasting hills, was brought to the disciples' minds, after the ascension of Jesus to glory,—we may easily imagine how great would be the comfort which it would minister to their souls. They would not only never again fall into any mistake regarding a doctrine so momentous and so full of blessing, but they would unceasingly meditate on and rejoice in it. It would be ever present to their thoughts; and the more clearly they apprehended it, the greater would be the comfort which it would bring to their troubled hearts.

But the testifying of the Holy Ghost concerning Jesus, to which our Lord here refers, does not relate to the Divinity of His person only: it relates no less to the glory and graciousness of His Mediatorial character. When Jesus told His disciples,—overwhelmed with sorrow at the thought that they should soon see His benign face no more, nor hear the accents of His heavenly voice, nor receive at His hands those offices of inexpressible tenderness which He had so often shown them,—that the Spirit whom He would send, would prove more than a substitute for Him,—it is easy to imagine how their hearts must have exulted at the assurance. Their souls would be transported with

the revelations which the Holy Ghost would make to them respecting the grace as well as the glory of Jesus. And do not the disciples of Christ in the present day all, more or less, realize the comfort which the Holy Ghost ministers to their minds, by unfolding to their view more fully than ever it had been before, the glory of the Person, and the graciousness of the work of Christ,—not His Work only, as regards His atoning sacrifice, but that intercessory work which He is carrying unceasingly on, with unfailing success, at the right hand of God in Heaven? This is a blessed thought, and it is one respecting which we all need to have the testifying of the Spirit.

Believers derive unspeakable comfort from the Spirit's testifying of Jesus with respect to His *real humanity*. The first disciples did not stand so much in need of the testimony of the Holy Ghost to their Lord's true humanity, as do those of the present day. They were more in danger of failing to perceive the proper Deity of Jesus, than of remembering that He was truly and essentially man. We have seen how very obscure the views of Christ's first disciples were with regard to His Divinity, but with respect to His humanity

it was impossible, circumstanced as they were, that they could ever, even for a single moment, be forgetful that He was bone of their bone, and flesh of their flesh. He was always with them, or at least He and they were never more than temporarily separated. They listened to the winning accents of His voice—their eye was never withdrawn from His radiant countenance,—they hourly received fresh tokens of the tenderness of that affection with which He regarded them,—His offices of kindness were unceasing—some of them had even leant on His bosom,—and they habitually realized a sense of His touching sympathies with them in all their sorrows, and in His readiness to relieve all their wants, so far as accorded with those acts of self-denial which it was necessary that they should have to perform, and which He so fully shared with them. They had, too, daily witnessed His deep compassion even for those who were not His disciples. They had listened to the conversation which had passed between Him and the young man who came to Him inquiring what he might do to inherit eternal life, and they saw how tenderly He loved that amiable, but unregenerated youth. They had also seen the tears

which He shed in profusion over the impenitent population of Jerusalem, and had heard the emphatic and touching tones in which He bewailed their obduracy, and deplored the consequent destruction, temporal and spiritual, which impended over them. They would never forget either His look, or the accents of His voice, when He said, "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace; but now they are hid from thine eyes." "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but ye would not, and now your house is left unto you desolate." Most touching also, as an exhibition of the proper and perfect humanity of our Lord, was that incident so affectingly recorded by the evangelist, in connection with the death of Lazarus. As Jesus looked into the grave which contained the earthly remains of Lazarus, with whom He had, while Lazarus was alive, been on terms of close and cordial intimacy,—He wept. How forcibly, though silently, those tears of the Redeemer showed the perfect humanity of His

nature, and what a precious proof we have in that simple fact, of the tender sympathy which Jesus, in virtue of His humanity, has with all His followers in their sufferings and sorrows.

In short, there was not a look, nor a word, nor an action of their Lord, during the period of His public ministry, which would not have deeply and abidingly impressed the first disciples with a conviction of His perfect humanity. It is otherwise with believers in Jesus in the present day. They have never beheld their Saviour in the flesh ; they have neither seen His face, nor heard His voice, and therefore there is a tendency in their minds to be forgetful of the great and blessed fact of His perfect humanity. In this way they lose much of the comfort which they ought to enjoy, and which it is God's pleasure they should possess. It is the province of the Holy Ghost to bring clearly before the minds of believers, that Jesus was, and is, as much man as He was and is God. He assumed our nature, and not only in that nature suffered, obeyed, and died, but He has taken it with Him up into heaven, where He will ever wear it. There was not a human sorrow of which He was not as susceptible as any of His

followers. Perhaps I should say, that He was more susceptible of sorrow and suffering than any of His disciples, inasmuch as His was a more exalted human nature than any of us possess. It is from the similarity of Christ's sorrows and sufferings to those of His followers, that He is able to sympathize so perfectly with them, in the deep waters through which they have to pass. It is because of His true humanity, that Jesus is the sympathizing Saviour, which He is so beautifully described by the apostle Paul as being. It is that which gives such unspeakable sweetness to the expression, "that we have not an high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but one who was in all points tempted," or tried, "like as we are, though without sin." And then, to think that in heaven He will ever appear in our nature ! What a glorious thought ! How it must comfort the heart of the Christian in the most unhappy periods of his life, when the Holy Ghost brings vividly before him the great truth, that not only did the Lord Jesus appear in our nature when on earth, but that He wears, and ever will wear, through all eternity, that nature in heaven. That will give to those redeemed by the

blood of Christ from among men, a far higher status, if one may so speak, than even that of the angels themselves: for, as He took not on Him their nature, but ours, when He came to this world, so it is our nature, not theirs, that He wears in glory. We shall consequently be able to claim a far closer relationship to Jesus than even the loftiest archangel can: for angels and archangels are but His creatures, whereas we are His brethren. And by that endearing term we shall be called by Him in glory,—just as He called His first disciples His brethren when He sojourned on earth. He will then, as now, be their Elder Brother. In accordance with this view,—that in virtue of our fraternal relationship to the Lord Jesus in heaven, we shall have a higher place and position than the angelic hosts, we read in the ninth verse of the seventh chapter of Revelation, that “the great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and *before* the Lamb,” while the angels are described as only standing “*round about* the throne.” The glorified saints are thus nearer to Jesus than the angels. Elsewhere, indeed, they are spoken of as being

not only in closer proximity to the throne of the Lamb than the angelic hosts, but as *sharing* the throne, or sitting on the throne, of their exalted Lord.

All this ineffable glory and unutterable happiness, which will be peculiar to the Redeemed, will spring from the fact of Jesus being in their nature in heaven as He appeared in their nature on earth. Nor is this all. The saints in glory, in virtue of Christ being in their nature, can claim in a sense—I speak it with the most profound reverence—relationship even with God himself, inasmuch as Christ is God as well as man. These are blessed truths; and when the Holy Ghost brings them home to the believer's soul, they prove the source of inexpressible comfort. I will perhaps be pardoned if I refer to an instructive illustration of this which came under my own immediate observation nearly twelve years ago. I quote from what I wrote a month or two afterwards in the most popular religious periodical of the day. Speaking of the death of one who sustained to me the closest and most tender of all earthly relationships, I said, in that publication:—"About a fortnight before her death, and when that event was not supposed,

either by herself or her friends, to be so near at hand, her husband, in one of those devotional exercises which they had together, when opportunity offered, incidentally alluded to the fact, that the redeemed in glory will occupy a much higher position, and have to rejoice in a far more exalted relationship, than even the angels themselves. The remark made a deep impression on her mind. The fact had never struck her before. She eagerly inquired the grounds of her husband's belief. He replied,—remarking that he wished to speak on such a subject with the deepest reverence—that the glorified saints would be superior to angels, inasmuch as they could claim relationship even with God himself,—Christ, who is God, having not only appeared in our nature, when in this world, but having taken that nature with Him to heaven. The glorious truth seemed to flash like the light of the meridian sun on her mind, and it continued, until the hour of her death, to fill her, at intervals, with a joy and rejoicing bordering on rapture.”

In saying that in virtue of the blessed and ennobling relationship which subsists between Christ and His disciples, as the result of His

having, in the fulness of time, taken our nature upon Him, and still appearing in that nature in heaven,—that we are in a sense to be regarded as actually related in our character as men to God himself,—I would desire to feel that I am treading on such holy and delicate ground, that it is right we should only speak on the subject so far as we have the undoubted authority of Scripture. Hear, then, the words of Jesus himself on this momentous point. In that sublime and singularly spiritual prayer which He offered up to God on behalf of His disciples, just before He left the world, and which is recorded in the seventeenth chapter of John, the Saviour thus expresses Himself, when speaking not only of those who were then, but who should become His disciples at any intervening period between that hour and the end of time: “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word: that they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they may be one in Us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me. And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them; that they may be one, even as We are one.”

Jesus here prays that His people "may all be one in Us," that is, in God and Himself. And He adds, that the glory which God had given Him, He had given them. Essentially, it cannot be necessary to say, that the creature never can be one with the Creator. God is essentially independent of and unconnected with His offspring on earth. Consequently, it could not be the essential glory of Christ which He had given to His disciples. The meaning of the passage obviously is, that there is a mysterious union between God and His people, which can only be apprehended by faith, but which is peculiar to the saints, and is the result of Christ's assumption of their nature. When the Holy Spirit brings this high and holy relationship of believers, even to God himself, with power to their minds, they find a sweetness in it, and derive a comfort from it which no mind can conceive. Then they can discern a beauty and blessedness which they never did before, in that passage of the apostle Paul, "Heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." No such language is applied to the loftiest seraphim or cherubim, or other order of angelic intelligences in heaven, and therefore believers in Jesus, when

the Holy Ghost enlightens their minds and touches their hearts on the subject, are filled with wonder, and with a joy unspeakable and full of glory.

But I will not dwell at greater length on the abundant consolation which the Holy Ghost ministers to the mind of the believer, when He brings the great fact of Christ's proper humanity home to the heart with power. I feel the less disposed to dwell on this source of comfort to the Christian, because I have gone so fully into the subject in my little work, "THE BROTHER BORN FOR ADVERSITY ; OR, THE SIMILARITY OF THE SAVIOUR'S SORROWS AND SUFFERINGS TO THOSE OF HIS FOLLOWERS." Let me simply say, that what Jesus was to His disciples when He lived and laboured here below, He is still, now that He is exalted at the right hand of God. He has carried thither with Him all that fervent affection, and all those tender sympathies, which He felt and exemplified, as their Brother, their Kinsman, the "partaker of their flesh and blood," during His earthly sojourn. There is not a circumstance, however minute, which occurs in our history, into which He does not enter. In whatever concerns

our happiness in any way, Jesus, like an Elder Brother, takes the deepest interest. How precious the thought ! What a means of ministering comfort to the saints, when employed by the Holy Ghost, must such a view of our glorious and glorified Saviour prove !

But the Holy Spirit was also to show the first disciples *things to come*. The things to come, which the Holy Ghost was to show the first disciples of Christ, may mean either what was destined to happen to the Church in their day, or things of a prophetic kind, which were to occur after they had slept with their fathers. But I would give the words a far more comprehensive signification. I would chiefly regard them as pointing to what the Holy Ghost, in His character of Comforter, would bring before the minds of the disciples, in reference to the glory which was afterwards to be revealed, and of which they would through all eternity be partakers in heaven ! We know that in this sense it is, in the present day, the special province of the Holy Ghost to show to believers in Christ things to come. And many a saint of God, as he reads these lines, will set to his seal, that the Holy Spirit has eminently and

emphatically proved a Comforter to his troubled heart, by the bright and blessed visions He has given him of the exceeding great and eternal weight of glory which will be his portion in heaven.

CHAPTER IX.

THE HOLY GHOST AS A COMFORTER—
CONTINUED.

THE Holy Ghost testifies of *God* as well as of Christ, and by the views which He gives to the believer of the Father, He brings inexpressible comfort unto his mind. The men of the world see nothing in God but a foe,—a Being who is angry with them every day, and every hour and moment of the day, because of their rebellion, their hardness of heart, and their scornful rejection of all the overtures of mercy which He makes to them through the merits and mediation of His Son. No wonder that they should be miserable. The marvel is, that they are not driven down to the very lowest depths of despair. With God for their enemy, and the certainty that if they die in the impenitence in which they are living, He will avenge Himself of them at last, and consign them to the blackness of darkness for ever,—the marvel is, that in such circumstances,

conscious of their condition and alive to the doom that awaits them, they can eat, drink, sleep, or have one moment's enjoyment of life. With the people of God, the case is just the reverse. He is their friend, and they are His friends. He is their Father and covenant God. In virtue of the latter relation, there is not a blessing which it is in the power of God to bestow which they have not a right to expect. Great and manifold blessings are theirs in possession. *All* blessings necessary to their perfect and eternal happiness are theirs in prospect. Every attribute of God is theirs. There is not a perfection which He possesses which is not pledged for the present safety, and the ultimate salvation of all His saints. Even He himself is theirs : for He calls Himself, by the pens of His inspired prophets and apostles, the portion of His people. They realize the great truth, that God not only has loved them from eternity, but loves them as ardently as ever in time, and will love them with an infinite and unchanging affection through all eternity. Surely if anything in the universe could minister comfort to the hearts of believers, it would be such a view of God's character as is here indicated. And

when the Holy Ghost does specially direct the minds of believers to the contemplation of such a theme, and leads them to dwell in detail upon it, He does, indeed, vindicate His claim to the character of the Comforter which the Lord Jesus gave Him, when about to bid His first disciples a final earthly adieu.

And as the Holy Ghost thus comforts the hearts of the saints by the views which He brings before their minds of Jesus Christ and of God, so He contributes largely to their happiness by testifying of *Himself*. Whatever He has done for them in the work of conviction and conversion, and afterwards in enlightening their minds and sanctifying their souls, He clearly brings before them, and deeply impresses on their hearts. They consequently are made eminently alive to the obligations under which they are laid to the Holy Ghost ; and that leads them to love and delight in the Third Person of the Trinity. And thus feeling that they owe, in a sense, as much to the convincing, converting, enlightening, and sanctifying operations of the Holy Ghost, for what they are and hope to become, as they do to the electing love of God, and the atoning and intercessory work of

Christ,—believers find a source of inexpressible happiness in the Holy Ghost, and thus can set to their seals that He, in virtue of what He is in Himself, is eminently deserving the title of the Comforter which Christ has given Him. Hence the prayer of Paul, that the communion of the Holy Ghost, as well as the love of God and the grace of the Lord Christ, might be enjoyed by the Corinthian church. And hence, also, the assertion—for it is an assertion, though seemingly put in the form of a supposition—in the first verse of the second chapter of the Second Epistle to the Philippians, that believers have fellowship with the Spirit. Paul knew that this must have been to the believers in Philippi the source of abundant comfort, inasmuch as he beseeches them to fulfil his own joy by their expression of the love which they bore to all other saints, and by striving after that unity of feeling, which is not only a great Christian duty, but the source of abounding happiness to all in whose heart it exists.

And as the people of God thus derive, through the agency of the Holy Spirit, inexpressible comfort from the contemplation of each of the Three Persons in the glorious Trinity, so they often find

a source of rich consolation *in their association with their fellow saints, and in that communion of spirit with them*, which is so frequently alluded to in the holy oracles. God intends that this association of the saints together, and this communion with each other, should be cultivated to a much greater extent than, I fear, it is. It is a privilege which is more or less accessible to the great majority of God's people. There are few believers that are so circumstanced, in the providence of God, as to be long deprived of the opportunity of meeting with fellow saints. And yet, of how many of those who may glance their eye over this volume, is it true, that they undervalue, and because undervalue, neglect the high and holy privilege? It is not so with the saints of God in either Old or New Testament times. David speaks of those with whom he took sweet counsel as he and they walked together to the house of God. And Malachi tells us, that in his time, they who feared the Lord spake often one to another ; and he adds, as showing how pleasing their association together was in God's sight, that God hearkened to and heard what they said, "and a book of remembrance was written for them that

feared the Lord and that thought upon his name ”
What abundant encouragement is here given to the saints of God to cultivate communion with each other. This fellowship of His people is not only well pleasing to Him, but eminently brings down His blessing on their intercourse with each other. Remember, too, how the disciples of Christ, both before and after His death, resurrection, and ascension into heaven, clung to each other in the bonds of holy intercourse. They were constantly in each other’s society ; to have been kept apart, would have been the source of inexpressible sorrow to them. Wondrous for tenderness and strength, were the ties of sympathy by which they were bound together. There was no discordance of views or feelings among them when they met ; and they met to commune with each other as often as circumstances permitted. They were, we are told, all together “with one accord.” None but those who have enjoyed the fulness of Christian fellowship, can conceive the high and holy delight of which it is productive. The Scriptures are very emphatic on this point. One illustration is given in the second chapter of the Acts, of so striking a kind, that every Christian must be familiar with

it. In the thirty-eighth verse the gift of the Holy Ghost is promised to all who should repent and believe. Three thousand souls did, on that memorable occasion, repent and believe, and the promise of receiving the Holy Ghost was consequently fulfilled in their experience. Then see what followed: "They continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." "And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people."

What a picture of happiness, as the result of that outpouring of the Spirit which knit the hearts of these disciples in love to each other, and drew and kept them together in the bonds of a holy intimacy. And what was thus realized and enjoyed in all its blessedness by the first Christians, may be no less so by believers of the present day. There is hardly a saint of God to whom I am now addressing myself, who has had providential opportunities of meeting with his fellow saints in church and prayer meetings, and on other hallowed occasions, who will not gladly and cordially bear his

testimony to this fact,—that when the Holy Spirit has been abundantly poured out in the assemblies of God's people, and there has been a bringing of heart into contact with heart, he has been, as it were, raised above the earth, and felt as did the three apostles who were present at the transfiguration of their Lord, when they wished to remain on the Mount, and not to descend and mix again in the affairs of the world.

“And the multitude of them that believed,” we are told, in the fourth chapter of the Acts, “were of one heart and of one soul : neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own ; but they had all things common.” What a striking picture is here presented to us, of the cordial union and close and constant communion which characterized the disciples soon after the ascension of their Lord. And observe, too, how this union and communion were connected with the operations of the Holy Spirit ; for in the very verse which precedes it, it is said : “And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together ; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the Word of God with boldness.”

It is evident that the union and communion which are spoken of in the next verse were the result of the disciples being filled with the Holy Ghost. To the comfort, and joy, and happiness, which were the fruits of this perfect accord and tender intimacy, the subsequent verses bear ample inferential testimony ; for nothing but a holy and happy frame of soul could have led those of them who had property, to sell it all and lay it down at the apostles' feet, in order that it might be distributed alike among all the disciples. Never, we will venture to say, were the comforts of the Holy Ghost more sensibly or more largely enjoyed by any of God's people, than they were by these early believers in Jesus. See again that other remarkable passage in the fifth chapter of the Ephesians. In the second verse Paul exhorts the Ephesians to walk in love, which necessarily involves the idea of association and communion, and then in the eighteenth, nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first verses, he says :— " Be filled with the Spirit ; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord ; giving thanks always for all things unto God and the

Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ ; submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God." It will again be observed, that all the holy and happy feelings which are afterwards specified as experienced by the Ephesian saints, were preceded by the descent of the Spirit, and His having taken up His place in their hearts. "Be ye filled with the Spirit." Who shall describe the comfort, who shall set forth the happiness, which these saints at Ephesus must have enjoyed, as the result of that union and communion which flowed from this descent of the Holy Ghost ?

Paul was remarkable among the early disciples for the value which he set on communion with the saints. To Timothy he says : "I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day ; greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy." How high and holy must have been the enjoyment which these two saints derived from the fellowship which they had with each other ? And so with regard to another eminent saint. Writing to Philemon,

Paul and Timothy conjointly say: "For we have great joy and consolation in thy love, because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother."

Where communion among the saints of God is close and cordial, it is natural, indeed inevitable, that all who are the subjects of it should be eminently happy. In the society of those with whom we have a perfect sympathy of sentiment on subjects of the highest and holiest kind, there must needs be a blessedness of which none but those who have experienced it can form any adequate idea. How sweet the close and constant contact of hearts full to overflowing of the tenderest sympathy. How solacing to the soul, in deep distress, to know that others enter fully into our griefs, having themselves experienced substantially, if not literally, the same sorrows. This is bearing one another's burdens, and consequently fulfilling the law of Christ. This last may not, strictly speaking, be the communion of saints, but it is a result from it, for sympathy in others' sorrows is the result of intimacy.

Were it not for the prevalence of the corruption which remains within us, all God's saints would

be irresistibly drawn towards each other. They would feel under the power of a mutual spiritual attraction which none could withstand. How numerous and how strong are the bonds of union which ought to bind the people of God towards each other. They all acknowledge the same heavenly Father; they are all redeemed by the same precious blood; they are all regenerated and, in part, sanctified, by the same Holy Spirit; they are all the members of the same mystical body of Christ; they are all brethren in Jesus; they have all come out from the rest of the world; they are all strangers and pilgrims on earth; they all look forward to an eternal home in heaven, as the result of their temporary sojourn in this world: they all, more or less, love, and fear, and serve God here; they all sing His high praises on earth, and they will all unite in one grand chorus of adoration in heaven, in which will be commingled the voices of the countless angelic throng, — and which will unceasingly resound through the porches of that glorious place. They have, too, the same sorrows and joys,—the same conflicts and triumphs. What more natural then, than that the saints should be attracted together,

and kept in a state of blessed communion, by the tender ties of Christian love ?

I earnestly wish that we had a great deal more of this communion of saints. There is too much of distance and of coldness towards each other, on the part of the people of God. It is very wrong for the saints to keep apart. They ought to have much exalted and intimate intercourse with each other. What Christian is there who cannot speak from experience here ? You who have enjoyed in the most abundant measure, the blessedness of intercourse with the people of God, tell me whether your pleasure has not been of the highest, the purest, and most ennobling nature ? I know you will return an affirmative answer to the question. The friendship and affection of believers in Christ for each other, should be of the strongest and most tender kind. They should habitually share each other's joys, partake of each other's sorrows, and seek systematically to realize the great truth that they are all spiritually parts of the same body, all members of the same household of faith, and all destined to be, in answer to Christ's prayer, one with Him as He is one with God. When such views as these, respecting the

communion of saints, are presented by the Holy Ghost to the souls of believers, they derive therefrom a measure of comfort which they find it impossible adequately to express. Holy and happy is the fellowship which the people of God thus have with each other. Let me urge those who may have been guilty of not rightly using and properly prizing the inestimable privilege of cultivating communion with their fellow saints, to be deeply humbled and penitent for their sin, and to seek hereafter the society of believers, with whom to interchange spiritual experiences,—hopes and fears, joys and sorrows. Let this be so, and you will find how eminently conducive it is to your comfort, how refreshing to your spirits, and how admirably adapted to strengthen you in your Christian course. Why,—oh, why should those who are to spend an eternity together in heaven, look coldly on, or keep at a distance from each other, here on earth?

It is most unnatural, it is most unseemly, to see any estrangement on the part of those who sustain the closest, tenderest, and holiest relations to each other,—relations, too, let me add, which will be lasting as eternity itself. Happy should I

be were I to be made the means, by what I have here said, of drawing the saints of God closer to each other, and leading them to cultivate habitual intercourse together. They are presumed to love one another; why not then seek earnestly for opportunities of communion together as regards their bodily presence, as well as in their spirits? They would all find an unspeakable blessedness in it. Let me appeal, as I have already by implication done, to you who have most largely experienced this communion with your fellow saints, whether you have not, next to those seasons in which you have been privileged to realize a sense of great nearness to God, when on your bended knees before Him,—found the happiest hours you ever enjoyed on earth, to be those which you have spent in familiar and sympathetic intercourse with your fellow believers in Jesus? I know that there is not a child of God realizing a sense of his adoption, who will not at once and joyfully respond affirmatively to my question. What Christian does not remember many periods in his history in which, when the world has been shut out, and none but God himself and His people have been present, he has felt something like the commence-

ment of heaven on earth, from mingling with his fellow believers in prayer meetings, or in other devotional services? Such seasons of sensible communion prove inexpressibly refreshing to each other's souls. Again, therefore, let me, with all earnestness and all Christian affection, urge on believers the high and holy privilege, as well as duty, of cultivating an intimate and constant intercourse with each other. We all need whatever aid we can give to one another in our journey towards our home in heaven ; and consequently we ought, with glad and grateful hearts, to avail ourselves of that assistance which is to be derived from the source on which we have, in the last few pages of this work, been dwelling. No real Christian ever yet had intimate communion with his fellow saints without feeling that his faith was thereby strengthened, his hope invigorated, his love to God and man increased, his soul nerved to meet the duties and difficulties of life, and made more susceptible of solace and support in those seasons of sorrow, through which every believer has more or less frequently to pass, in his pathway to his heavenly home.

CHAPTER X.

THE HOLY GHOST AS A COMFORTER—
CONCLUDED.

THE Holy Ghost proves a Comforter to the people of God by giving them *humbling views of themselves*, and causing them to carry out these lowly views in their practice, by walking humbly with their God. Pride or haughtiness of spirit is incompatible with real felicity. A proud man is of necessity a miserable man. It is of the very essence of pride to make the man who is its slave the subject of wretchedness. On the other hand, it is equally of the essence of humility, that he in whose spirit the virtue dwells should be happy. Philosophy and revelation alike concur in asserting the justice of these axioms. They are clearly to be found in the writings of the ancient moralists, as well as in the pages of Scripture. But inasmuch as the humility which the Gospel produces in the minds of those who have embraced

it, is deeper and purer than any which ever was, or ever can be, the result of the mere dictates of philosophy—in the same proportion is the happiness derived from the humility of the Gospel, superior to any which is the fruit of mere moral or philosophical agencies. The Holy Spirit, by first making and then keeping the saints humble, ministers greatly to their happiness. Humility is a most important grace, not merely as viewed in connection with the safety of believers—for humility is essential to the stability of the saints in the ways of God—but it is an important grace, as contributing largely to their comfort. They remember, and rejoice while they remember, the great and manifold precious promises which are given in connection with the existence and operation of this Christian grace. God himself graciously says :—"To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at My word." And can the saint fail to be happy when he is conscious of the fact that even God himself deigns to look to or on him with complacency and delight? Pride is everywhere denounced, and humility everywhere inculcated in the holy oracles. "The lofty looks of

man," says God, speaking by the prophet Isaiah, "shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day." The inculcation of humility was a remarkable feature in the ministrations of our Lord. When, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God," He meant by "poor in spirit," those who were clothed with the grace of humility. On another occasion, He exhorted those whom He addressed, to possess and exemplify this Christian virtue, by telling them that he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. And who that ever read, can forget the singularly impressive parable, by which, in the case of the pharisee and the publican, Christ illustrated the opposite qualities of pride and humility? No one, I am sure, can have any hesitation in deciding as to which of these two was the happiest man. In the proud, lofty, self-righteous, and scornful spirit of the pharisee, there were all the elements of an inexpressible misery, while the poor, lowly, humble publican experienced a corresponding happiness; for Jesus tells us that he went down to his house justified rather than the

other; and if justified, then necessarily happy. And if it were needful to dwell at greater length on the important contributions which the virtue of humility makes to the Christian's comfort, I would refer to the striking exemplification which Jesus himself gave us of the grace of humility in His own habitual conduct, from the first to the last hour of His public ministry. There was no one feature in Christ's character more prominent than that of His deep humility. And the example, in this respect, which our Redeemer set us, it is alike our happiness and our duty to endeavour to follow. Let me then urge on my Christian readers to pray with all earnestness, that the Holy Ghost may be pleased to put away all pride of spirit, and to increase greatly and abidingly the virtue of humility. This is a prayer which all of us ought frequently and fervently to offer up, because there still remains, even in the renewed mind, a large amount of pride. Let us never forget that God resisteth the proud. There is no sight more displeasing to Him than pride in His creatures, and especially in His people. It was pride—which is essentially the same as rebellion against God—that caused the expulsion of the fallen angels

from heaven ; and there is no feeling which is more fatal to real piety in the minds of God's people, than that most odious quality. A proud Christian is, indeed, a contradiction ; and yet it is not to be denied, that many a one whose Christianity we dare not doubt, has much of this most unseemly quality within him. It is a spirit which every saint of God ought incessantly and resolutely to war against. And just as the Holy Ghost reveals the guilt of pride, and lays the axe at its root, in that proportion will the believer be happy ; for it is added, in the verse which has just been quoted, that while God resisteth the proud, " He giveth grace," that is, more grace, " to the humble," and grace is but another name for happiness. By making, therefore, and keeping the believer lowly in spirit, the Holy Ghost ministers to his comfort, and proves His right to the title which Jesus has given Him—that of being THE COMFORTER.

Godly sorrow for sin is another feeling in the believer's mind, which the Holy Ghost makes the means of ministering comfort to him. This will sound a contradiction in the ears of the men of the world. That sorrow and happiness should be allied, must not only seem to them to be strange

in the extreme, but impossible. They are right, so far as regards their own sorrows, which, instead of working happiness, work misery, or, as the Scriptures say, death. But it is otherwise with godly sorrow,—that sorrow which is the fruit of the operation of the Holy Spirit. I do not, I am sure, address a single saint of God, who has had an average amount of experience in the Divine life, who will not set his seal to this fact,—that when his feelings of filial sorrow, on account of the sins he has committed against his heavenly Father and covenant God, have been the most poignant, at that very time he has experienced emotions of indescribable happiness. It is, I repeat, impossible for the worldling to imagine how this can be; it is not easy even for the believer to explain the seeming contradiction. But he has the testimony of his own experience to the fact. He has felt it in all its blessed force. And even in a measure it admits of explanation. The sorrow of which I speak, as being experienced by the saints, has its origin in eminently vivid views of the love and grace of God. He who is thus contrite in soul, and broken in spirit, is filled alike with amazement and adoration at the inexhaustible

patience which God has exercised towards him. He wonders that God could have spared him so long in the land of the living, and in a place of hope, when profoundly and painfully conscious that every day and every hour he had been giving Him the greatest provocations to cut him down as a cumberer of the ground,—even, in a comparative sense, since the day he believed in Christ. This simple circumstance so forcibly unfolds to him the loving heart of a loving God, that while it deepens his sorrow for sin, it so powerfully draws out his heart to God, in wonder, in filial affection and in gratitude, that he experiences a pleasure in connection with his sorrow for sin, of the highest and holiest kind of which the mind of man, in his present state, is susceptible. A really penitent posture of soul is inexpressibly blessed. In the tears of godly sorrow for sin, there are pleasures infinitely transcending those which the men of the world derive from their amusements and occupations. The tears of true Christian contrition are emphatically tears of joy. I feel assured that never did David experience more real happiness, than when he poured forth the sorrows of His heart to God, in his penitential psalm. There

was something unutterably child-like in his contrition; something inexpressibly sweet, as well as sacred, in the sorrows of his soul at that moment. In the very first verse of the Psalm he shows how profound was his conviction of the loving kindness of God, and the multitude of his tender mercies. And such a view of the character of God must needs have, through the Holy Spirit's operation on his mind and heart, ministered comfort to his soul. "Make me," he says, in the eighth verse, "to hear joy and gladness, that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice." At the very moment he uttered this prayer, he possessed, there cannot be a doubt, the very joy and gladness which he supplicated at the throne of grace. And so with regard to his prayer, "Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation, and uphold me with Thy free Spirit,"—David did, at that very moment, realize in his blessed experience the joys of God's salvation, and the upholdings of God's free Spirit. When, again, in the fifteenth verse, he says, "O Lord, open thou my lips, and my mouth shall show forth Thy praise," we may feel assured that at that very instant his heart was full of love, of thanksgiving, and of praise to God;

and these are exercises of the soul, with which the highest order of earthly happiness is associated. In the seventeenth verse, the Psalmist gives an explicit utterance to the truth which I am endeavouring to impress on the minds of my readers, namely, the real blessedness there is in godly sorrow for sin. "The sacrifices of God," he says, "are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise." No man can feel, as David then felt, that he is offering acceptable sacrifices to God, without, at the same time, experiencing the highest order of happiness. To feel that we are doing that which we know to be well pleasing to God, will be the chief source of the happiness of heaven; and those, therefore, who now realize, in their godly sorrow for sin, the fact that they are thereby rendering, through the merits and mediation of Christ, acceptable service to God, cannot fail to experience a blessedness which they would not exchange for all the pleasures, untruly so called, which the wealth, or the power, or the rank of the world can command. Let me assure the saints of God, that the deeper that sorrow for sin is, which the Holy Spirit produces, the greater will be their happiness. Godly

sorrow is made, by the agency of the Holy Ghost, to minister, in a very eminent degree, to the comfort of the saints. But no child of God who knows what a broken heart on account of sin is, will need much reasoning or assurance on this point. He has only to consult his own past experience, to receive an ample confirmation of all I have said, respecting the blessedness of real contrition of soul on account of sin. Have not you, my Christian reader, found some of the happiest moments you have ever enjoyed on earth, to be those when, on your bended knees before God, you have felt your heart melt within you, while your eyes have been suffused with tears, at the remembrance of the sins you have committed, since the days of your regeneracy, against so gracious, so loving, and so long-suffering a God, as your God has been? Has not your heart been filled to overflowing with gratitude and joy, when you have contrasted all that He has been to you with what you have been to Him? I know that to these questions I will receive affirmative answers from the lowest depths of many a Christian bosom. Let us all then seek more earnestly than ever we have done before, that the Holy Ghost

may deepen our filial sorrow for sin, and make the sorrow which he so produces, the means of more ample comfort to our souls, than we have ever yet experienced.

The people of God find another great source of consolation in the conviction produced, and made permanent, by the Holy Ghost, that, however dark at times may be the dispensations of God's providence, however great their worldly trials, or painful their spiritual experiences, *they are all intended and all adapted to work together for God's glory and their good.* The Christian's pathway to heaven is always found to be more or less rugged, and to be more or less enshrouded in darkness. He is made to feel, and constrained plaintively to say, that the road along which he has to pass is so full of thorns and so rough, that he often fears he will faint by the way. And if to this is added, an uncertainty as to what is the right road, who shall wonder that he is greatly cast down? It is at such seasons as this, that the Holy Ghost comes to him, and pointing out the path along which he is to pass, says, "This is the way, walk ye in it." The mind of the believer is thus comforted when the Holy Spirit has assured him that he is on the

right way. And his comfort is greatly increased when the Spirit gives him the blessed assurance, that however great may be the obstacles to his progress which lie along his path, and however rough and dark the road may be, he shall hold on his course. The gracious promise is brought to his mind, which is recorded in the second verse of the forty third chapter of Isaiah, "When thou passeth through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flames kindle upon thee." This holds true of spiritual distress of mind, but it is especially with regard to afflictive dispensations of Providence, that I wish, in this part of my volume, to consider it. Great and manifold are the providential afflictions of the righteous. The men of the world are not without their sorrows; but, as a rule, the people of God have a greater share of troubles than those who are strangers to divine grace. It is emphatically through much tribulation that believers must enter into the kingdom of God. It is in their seasons of deepest trial, when all things, in their own view, are going against them, that they

especially realize the presence of the Holy Spirit, in all His sustaining and solacing power. That word is brought to their minds with an inexpressible sweetness and power, which assures them that all the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth to such as keep His covenant and His testimonies. No less blessed to the tried and tempted believer, is the assurance given by Paul, that all things shall work together for good to them who are the called according to God's purpose. These are precious truths, and when the Holy Ghost brings them home to the heart, in demonstration and in power, they are felt to be just the very truths which were most needed, and most adapted to minister comfort to those who had been greatly cast down by reason of the way.

The Holy Ghost largely imparts consolation to believers, by leading them frequently to take a retrospective view of all the *goodness which they have received at the hands of God* in the days and years that are gone. They are filled with wonder, admiration, and gratitude when they look back on all the loving-kindnesses and tender mercies which He has made to pass before them. They are constrained to confess from the inmost depths

of their souls, that His mercies have been new to them every morning. They can say, and they rejoice in saying, with David, that goodness and mercy have followed them all the days of their life. They adore the wondrous display of God's favour both in providence and grace. The Holy Ghost recalls with so much vividness the leading exhibitions of the Divine beneficence, and of the riches of God's grace, that their hearts are filled to overflowing with love and thankfulness to the gracious Being who has thus every hour of their lives loaded them with His choicest blessings, both temporal and spiritual. And then their wonder, their gratitude, and their joy, are largely increased when they think how utterly undeserving they have been of the least of God's favours. They are deeply conscious that while He has thus so largely enriched them with temporal blessings in the dispensations of His providence, and spiritual blessings in the dispensations of His grace, they have been not only criminally unmindful of His mercies, but have daily, more or less, lived in open rebellion against Him. None but the Christian who has had these humbling views of his own unworthiness, and these

exalted views of God's most wondrous goodness and grace, can have any idea what an amount of comfort the believer derives from the retrospect of the dealings with him, of that God who is "rich in mercy." And the believer derives additional comfort when the Holy Spirit leads him to confide in the future good providence and abounding grace of God,—a confidence which springs from the blessed experience he has had of the goodness of God's providence, and the riches of His grace in the past period of his life, as well as from the exceeding great and precious promises of God's word. How inexpressibly blessed it must be thus to feel a thorough conviction from past experience of the Divine goodness, as well as from faith in those promises which assure us of the fact,—that goodness and mercy will continue to follow us all the days of our life, as they have done in that portion of our existence which is past.

But it is not in the retrospect only of what God has done for His people in passing along the path of life, so far as that path has been trod by them, that they, through the Holy Ghost, find exceeding comfort to their souls. They are over-

joyed in the recollection of what He has kept them from, as well as in the remembrance of the positive mercies He has bestowed upon them. They feel that but for the restraints of His grace, they would, times without number, have fallen into the most flagrant sins—sins which would not only have proved, if unrepented of and unpardoned, the ruin of thir souls for ever, but which would, even if repented of and forgiven by God, have destroyed their reputation among their fellow-men, and brought such shame and confusion upon themselves, as that they could never again hold up their heads in society,—hardly even endure existence. Let conscience here do its duty with fidelity, while the reader is perusing this part of my volume. Let that faithful monitor fulfil the functions which God has assigned to it in the human breast. Let it solemnly and deliberately deliver its verdict. And then let the reader—and the writer would in this matter identify himself with his readers—say whether in many cases he has not been guilty of sins, if not in the life, in the heart, which make him feel, that were all his secret iniquities, his transgressions of thought, if not of word or of deed, known

to his fellow men as well as they are known to God, — he would be constrained to live in seclusion from the world as far as that were practicable in the circumstances in which he is placed. What cause of joy and gratitude then ought not the saint to feel in the retrospect of God's goodness in not making known his secret sins,—sins it may be, of the deepest dye, and in preventing, by the restraints of His grace, sins of the grossest and most aggravated kind which have ever been conceived in the heart, from being brought forth in the life and conversation? When the Spirit deeply impresses the minds of believers with these views of what they owe to God for His wondrous grace in throwing a veil over some of their greatest sins, and in preventing others from being actually committed, they are filled with gratitude, joy, and peace.

But while the Christian derives unspeakable comfort from this source, he finds another overflowing fountain of comfort in the remembrance of what God has done for him, through His Spirit, *in the way of sanctification*. I much fear that some of God's people fix their minds so exclusively on the corruptions which they know

from painful experience to be still remaining within them, that they forget, in too many instances, the wondrous work of grace which God has wrought for them,—in translating them from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of His dear Son, and by renewing them in so large a measure in the spirit of their minds. This is wrong. It is a great sin. While deploring our grievous and frequent defects, we should never be unmindful of that free and sovereign grace which plucked us as brands from the burning, and has still kept us from finally falling from the paths which lead to glory. We should ever remember that God hath rescued us from eternal ruin, and that, however great may be the cause which we have to lament the little progress we have made in holiness, yet that we have made some, and are making more, and will be at last made perfect in holiness, as a preliminary process to our being made perfect in happiness in heaven. When the Holy Ghost thus enables the believer clearly to discern the abundant reason he has to adore the riches of God's grace, in what He has done for him and wrought in him, his soul is greatly comforted: it is filled with adoration, joy, and praise.

And let me add, that the adoration, joy, and praise which are thus begun on earth will be made perfect and permanent in heaven. It has long been the deep conviction of my mind, that the clear and complete retrospect which the saints will have in heaven of all that Divine grace did for them in this world, and of the flagrant acts of guilt which they were prevented from committing, by the restraints of that grace,—will be one of the leading sources of happiness in the regions of celestial bliss.

Zealous and sustained activity in the service of God, is another means which the Holy Ghost employs to comfort the hearts of believers. An inactive Christian is a contradiction. The man who does not feel for those who feel not for themselves, though manifestly in imminent danger of perishing in their guilt,—has great reason to doubt the reality of his own religion. And to feel and not act, is just as anomalous in any one professing to be a believer in Christ, as not to feel at all. It is of the very essence of the religion of Jesus, that it should fill the soul with profound compassion for those who are living without hope and without God in the world. And not only so, but that this

feeling of compassion should embody itself in habitual action. Jesus himself wept over the impenitent, and laboured earnestly and incessantly for their salvation. And who that has studied the character of the "chiefest of the apostles," has not been deeply impressed with the largeness of his heart,—his unbounded benevolence in reference to those who were either living in open rebellion against God, or who, being His people, fell far short of that standard of Christian attainment which they ought to have reached? Did he not say of some of those Philippians to whom he addressed his epistle, "I have told you before, and now tell you even *weeping*, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ?" And did he not in the intensity of his feeling for some of his unbelieving brethren among the Jews, and in the fervour of his desire to make all possible efforts for their salvation, say, on another occasion, that he could even wish that he "were accursed from Christ, for his brethren, his kinsmen according to the flesh?" Who has not read with wonder and admiration the record of the extraordinary labours which Paul underwent, the privations he endured, and the perils through which he passed, in the inten-

sity of his zeal to glorify God and honour the Lord Jesus Christ, in the salvation of souls ? He seemed to live for nothing else. If sinners were but converted, or the saints edified and comforted, and built up in the faith of the Gospel through his instrumentality, he was prepared to endure any privations, encounter any amount of obloquy, expose himself to any personal danger, and even courageously and resignedly to submit to martyrdom itself. The object to be gained was, in his eye, one of such surpassing magnitude and importance, that no sacrifice would be too great to insure it. And let me add, that all Christ's disciples of the present day ought to be equally devoted and self-denying.

Little do the saints of God, who only give themselves partially up to His service, know what they lose in real enjoyment by their half-heartedness. There is a blessedness far transcending all conception, and which can only, in any measure, be known by those who have felt it, in consecrating one's self cordially, unreservedly, and habitually to the service of God. Service, both as regards angels and the glorified saints, will be the unceasing occupation of the inhabitants of

heaven. "They serve him day and night," will, through all eternity, be equally true of angels and of the spirits of the just made perfect in the abodes of bliss. And in that service both angels and men will find a source of ineffable and unfailing happiness. Deny the angelic hosts, and the redeemed from among men, the privilege of serving God, and the happiness of heaven would experience a great diminution. And I know I can confidently appeal to those of the people of God, who may favour me by perusing this volume, whether they have not found the happiest hours they have ever spent on earth, to be those in which, with greatest singleness of heart, and devotedness of spirit, they have sought to engage in the service of God. I feel persuaded that every reader of this work, renewed by the Holy Ghost in the spirit of his mind, will set his seal to this, that just in proportion to the zeal and heartiness with which he has endeavoured to apply himself to the performance of those active duties of life which had a special connection with the advancement of God's glory, was the measure of happiness which he derived from that source. In aiming and striving in all things to do the will, and to promote the cause

of God in the world, the believer finds an exquisite, often an ecstatic, delight. He has a sort of foretaste, or prelibation of that happiness in heaven which will be derived from the perfect, continuous, and eternal service which all the saints shall thererender to a Triune Jehovah. Many a time have eminent Christians felt most unhappy, even when in their closets and on their knees, because of the prevalence of a spirit of bondage, instead of a spirit of filial affection ; and they could receive no real comfort until they emerged from their closets, entered the spheres of active life, and vigorously and heartily applied themselves to the duty of labouring for God and His cause, in the midst of those who were living in open hostility to both. I think it is Cecil,—at all events, it is some eminent divine—who says, that he had, on a particular occasion, been for some time in a state of great depression of spirits, because he failed to have a clear discernment of his personal interest in Christ. While one day, in the secrecy of his closet, deploring this in deep prostration both of body and spirit before God, he heard a noise outside the house, and, on looking out of the window, he saw two men engaged in a savage fight, with

a number of persons around them, some of them blaspheming and uttering most awful imprecations on themselves and others. He quitted his study, went out, and separated the parties who were fighting. He then solemnly but affectionately reproved those who had been swearing, and blaspheming the name of God. The result was most salutary on, at least, some of the ungodly men to whom he had addressed himself; while on his own mind the effect was indescribably blessed. He returned to his closet freed from a spirit of bondage, realizing a sense of his adoption, and happy beyond the power of language to express, as the result of this one act of simple but hearty service in the cause of God. Nor do I doubt, that many of those to whom I am now addressing myself, can point to some incidents in their own Christian experience of a substantially similar kind. Let me urge you, therefore, who may have been but half-hearted or fitful in the service of God, to be so no longer; but, on the contrary, to engage in God's service habitually, and with all your heart, and soul, and strength. And, if so, you will, assuredly, through the agency of the Holy Spirit, derive from this unreserved and cor-

dial consecration of yourselves to the cause of God, a degree of happiness far surpassing any bliss of which you have had previous experience. Let every believer who reads these pages, ask himself "What have I done, what am I doing, and what can I do, for the Lord?" and then let him respond to the admonitions and counsels of his own conscience, enlightened by the holy oracles, on the subject. Let every believer be assured of this,—that the harder and heartier he labours in the service of God, the greater will be his comfort, through the Holy Ghost.

The Holy Ghost further proves Himself to be the comforter of God's people by His gracious unfoldings of the *happiness reserved for them in heaven*. He causes them to rise above the present world, and to look onwards and upwards to the regions of celestial and eternal bliss. In all their seasons of sorrow He pours into their spiritual ear, in accents tender and persuasive beyond all thought, the consoling truth that there is a rest which remaineth for the people of God, and that their temptations and trials, whatever they may be, will only endure for a few brief years at most. The Holy Spirit exhorts believers to look less at

the things which are seen and are temporal, and more at the things which are not seen and are eternal. They are directed, and, in a measure, are also enabled, to fix the eye of faith on the glory to be revealed, and to be for ever enjoyed the moment they have passed the pearly gates. He instructs them to look at all things in the light of eternity, and when they are enabled to do this, their souls are filled with unspeakable comfort and joy. So great indeed is the comfort which they derive from the conviction that heaven, in the perfection of its inconceivable happiness, will be theirs through all eternity, that they can fully enter into the mind of the Spirit, and the meaning of the apostle, when the latter exultingly remarked, "We joy in tribulations." When faith is thus, through the operation of the Holy Ghost, in lively exercise, the Christian can truly welcome, and rejoice in trials which otherwise would be insupportable. When the Holy Ghost thus sanctifies and blesses the sorrows of the believer, and which by contrast adds, if we may so speak, to the blessedness of heaven, he would not wish to be without his troubles. Those only who have experienced this faith in the future, can tell how sweet sorrows can be-

come to the Christian who is exercised thereby. The joys of the better world will, he knows, be greatly heightened by the deep waters of affliction through which he had to pass in his pilgrimage to his heavenly home. The bright and blessed prospect which the Holy Spirit reveals to the believer in Jesus, ministers to his mind consolations of the most sublime and most exquisite kind. I feel as I write that many, indeed the great majority of my more experienced readers, will promptly and heartily say "Amen" to all this. With them it is not merely matter of testimony on the part of others; with them it is no creed or theory: it is a great and blessed fact, grounded on their own happy experience, as well as on the declarations of God's Word. Some Christians have had such bright and blessed visions of future glory in the midst of their deepest sorrows on earth, that they have actually forgotten their griefs when the pressure of their trials was at its climax, and fancied themselves to be in the actual possession of that glory and that happiness which the Holy Spirit had revealed to them as their portion for ever. And when they have awoke from what a vigorous faith and clear perception

of heavenly things had thus converted into a sort of spiritual trance,—a trance only in so far as the *present* possession of heaven's happiness is concerned—they still experienced but little diminution of their bliss, because faith had, through the operation of the Holy Spirit, again stepped forward and brought home to their minds, in demonstration and in power, the great fact, that after all, only a few years at most, very possibly only a few months, or weeks, or days, would intervene between that moment of their existence and their actual and everlasting enjoyment of all the celestial happiness and glory, which had thus been so vividly spread before their admiring minds and adoring hearts. But to say that believers will enjoy all the bliss and all the glory in heaven, which the Holy Spirit thus enables them, through the instrumentality of faith, to realize in a sense here on earth, would not be saying enough. They will enjoy incalculably more than ever entered the mind of the most advanced believer privileged to have the clearest perceptions of future glory; for we are told that “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that

love him." Were there no other passage in God's Word calculated to speak, through the agency of the Holy Ghost, comfort to the believer's mind, surely that passage should fill his soul with "a joy unspeakable and full of glory."

I have thus glanced at *some* of the leading means which the Holy Ghost employs in His character of the Comforter, for the purpose of ministering consolation to the people of God in their transit through a world in which there is so much suffering and sorrow, arising from causes both within and without themselves. I have, by implication, recognized as indispensable to the comfort of the saints, a deep and abiding sense of sins forgiven through the blood of Christ—the witnessing of the Spirit, the sealing of the Spirit, and the assurance of faith—expressions which are synonymous in import. Without a consciousness of pardon, without the witnessing of the Spirit with our spirits that we are the children of God by adoption and regeneration, and without the conviction that we are sealed, or made safe, for eternity, by the Holy Spirit of promise,—without all this, which simply means the assurance of faith, those gracious and glorious views of Divine truth

on which we have been dwelling, would minister no comfort to any troubled mind. It is because the believer is enabled by the Holy Ghost to realize the great fact that all things are his, and that the things which we have enumerated are among the number, and that he is, in a word, pardoned, sanctified, and accepted in the Beloved—that he is filled with comfort, rejoices with a joy unspeakable and full of glory, and, as has already been remarked, even realizes in a modified measure the commencement of heaven on earth.

CHAPTER XI.

THE DUTY OF BELIEVERS TO SEEK THE
COMFORT OF THE HOLY GHOST.

WE have thus adverted at some length, though not at the length, had space permitted, at which we could have wished to have gone into the subject, to the abundant sources of consolation which are provided for the people of God in His Word. We have also endeavoured to bring before the minds of our readers some of the leading modes through which the Holy Ghost ministers comfort to the hearts of God's people. It now remains that we seek briefly to impress on the minds of believers, that it is their bounden duty, as well as their highest privilege, to receive with adoring minds and grateful hearts that comfort which God intends they should, through the agency of the Holy Spirit, not only enjoy, but enjoy in the greatest abundance.

The very fact of God's having made such ample

provision for the comfort of His people, by the mission of the Holy Spirit not only into the world, but into their minds and hearts, would of itself be sufficient to satisfy every rational person, that God, in His great mercy, meant that His saints should be made happy even in the present world : for God never does anything in vain. He never provides a system of means without intending thereby to accomplish some benevolent end. But we are not left to mere inference on the subject. God has graciously given us express assurances in numerous parts of His Word, that it is His purpose that His people should have ample and unceasing comfort ministered to them, amid all the sorrows and sufferings which are incident to their pilgrimage to their home in heaven. There is one such passage of so gracious a nature, that were there no other, the Christian who meditates upon it would find in it alone an adequate assurance that God means that his saints should have abundant consolation while treading their weary way through this vale of tears. Through the lips of Isaiah he speaks directly to them. He says to the prophet : “ Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, saith the Lord.” Observe how the word “ com-

fort" occurs twice in one line. The circumstance shows how much God desires the comfort of His people, and how resolved He is that they shall be comforted. In the next verse we have another proof of the same thing ; for there God enjoins Isaiah to "speak comfortably to Jerusalem."

"The Lord," we are told in the third verse of the fifty-first chapter of the same book, "the Lord shall comfort Zion : He will comfort all her waste places ; and He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord ; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody." In the last chapter of the same book, God, speaking by His own lips, says to His saints : "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you ; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem." In the seventeenth verse of the first chapter of Zechariah, God again speaks to His people to the same effect : "And the Lord," He says Himself, "shall yet comfort Zion, and shall yet choose Jerusalem." In that beautiful portion of the writings of the evangelical prophet, from the first to the third verses of the sixty-first chapter, the great truth, that it is God's purpose that His people should be

comforted, is blessedly brought forth, though the word "comfort" only occurs once in the passage : " The Spirit of the Lord God," says Isaiah, " is upon me ; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek ; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound ; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God ; to comfort all that mourn ; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness ; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified."

And what God thus commands the prophet to do, had already been done by Himself. " Sing, O heavens," says the same prophet, in a subsequent chapter, " and be joyful, O earth, for the Lord hath comforted his people, and will have mercy on his afflicted." In the twelfth verse of the same chapter, God says again : " I, even I, am He that comforteth you." In the ninth verse of the fifty-second chapter of the same prophetic

book, Isaiah says: "Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem: for the Lord hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem."

No words which it were possible for an inspired pen to employ could make the gracious truth, that God wishes His people to be comforted, more clear than it is here presented to our minds. In accordance with this view of the benevolent purposes and merciful intentions of the Most High towards His sorrowing and suffering saints on earth, Paul speaks of Him as the "God of all comfort." In the following verse, namely, the fourth of the first chapter of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, he speaks of God as comforting himself and his fellow labourers in the cause of Christ, in all their tribulation, that they might be able to comfort those who were in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith they were comforted of God. In the sixth verse of the seventh chapter of the same Epistle, Paul speaks of God as the Comforter of them that are cast down. In the Thessalonians, the apostle prays, that "God, even our Father, who hath loved us and given us everlasting consolation, and good hope through

grace, might comfort their 'hearts, and establish them in every good word and work."

It is important here, parenthetically to observe, that in the various passages we have just quoted, God is spoken of, and not the Holy Spirit, as the Comforter of the saints in all their sorrows. And so God the Father is essentially the source or fountain of all comfort. The Spirit is called the Comforter, because it is His especial and exclusive province to conduct the believer to God, as the great spring of all consolation. The Holy Ghost, being co-equal with the Father, has in Himself essentially the elements of all consolation; but in the economy by which the redemption of mankind is wrought out, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit have their respective parts to perform. The Spirit bears the title of Comforter, because He leads the sinner through Christ, not only up to the throne of God in glory, but to His very bosom, in which he rests and rejoices. It is the work of the Spirit to present such views of the character of the Father, and of the Son also, to the believer, as fills his mind with unutterable comfort, and a joy that is not only unspeakable, but full of glory.

Other words are used in numerous parts of Scripture besides that of "comfort," which denote the same happy feeling of mind, and are employed in such a way as to prove conclusively how much it is the good pleasure of God that His people should be comforted as they journey along the perilous and rugged road of life. "Joy," "peace," "rejoice," "rejoicing," are among the number.

"The kingdom of God," we are told, "is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace, and *joy* in the Holy Ghost." Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, prays that the God of hope might fill them with all *joy* and peace in believing, that they might abound in hope,—which, in this case, is synonymous with comfort,—through the power of the Holy Ghost. The same apostle, in his Epistle to the Galatians, says, that the fruit of the Spirit is love, *joy*, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith. John, in the first chapter and fourth verse of his First Epistle, says that the great object which he had in writing to the Christians of his day, was that their *joy* might be full. But a greater far than John, or any other of the apostles, employed the same phrasology long

before the beloved apostle made use of the words. In what may be regarded as the farewell address of our Lord to His disciples, recorded in the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth chapters of the Gospel of John, in urging them to ask whatever they needed, of the Father or Himself, He assigns as a reason why he was so earnestly desirous to bestow blessings on them, that their *joy* might be *full*. They already experienced a large measure of joy from His presence and the gracious words which He had addressed, and was then in the act of addressing, to them; but their joy was not a little lessened by their knowledge of the fact that He was about to leave the world and them. And knowing that much sorrow mingled with their joy, He was anxious not only that their joy should preponderate over their sorrow, but that their joy should be complete. "Ask and ye shall receive, that your *joy* may be *full*."

"Rejoice," and "rejoicing," are words of similar import with "joy," and are, like the latter term, synonymous in the instances which we are about to quote, with the word "comfort." That it is the will and the wish of God that His people should be comforted by the Holy Ghost, amidst

all the scenes of sorrow through which they have to pass in this world, is abundantly shown by the use in Scripture of the words, "rejoice," and "rejoicing," as applied to believers. "Let all them," says David, addressing God, "Let all them that put their trust in Thee *rejoice*." "Let the righteous," he elsewhere says, "*rejoice*; yea, exceedingly *rejoice*." Again, in the third verse of the hundred and fifth Psalm, he says, speaking by the command of God, through the inspiration of the Holy Ghost: "Glory ye in His holy name: let the heart of them *rejoice* that seek the Lord." Zechariah, too, exhorts the people of God in his day to rejoice in the Lord, and this is done by God speaking to them in His own person through the prophet: "Sing and *rejoice*, O daughter of Zion; for, lo, I come and will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord." In the ninth verse of the ninth chapter of the same book, the exhortation to the saints of God is thus repeated: "*Rejoice* greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: Behold, thy King cometh unto thee: He is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass."

Coming down to the New Testament, we find numerous injunctions laid on believers to rejoice. "Finally, my brethren," says Paul, addressing the Philippian Church, "*rejoice* in the Lord." And again, in a subsequent chapter, he exhorts them with still greater emphasis to rejoice in the Lord: "*Rejoice* in the Lord *always*; and again I say, *rejoice*." The importance which Paul attached to Christian comfort or joy, is made manifest by two things which occur in this verse, brief though it be. The exhortation to rejoice is repeated: "*Again* I say, *rejoice*." The joy of believers is not to be occasional only; it is to be habitual: "*Rejoice* in the Lord *always*." In the Epistle to the Thessalonians, the same exhortation is given. "*Rejoice* evermore." Not only were the Thessalonians to rejoice, but they were to rejoice *evermore*. They were not to be strangers to comfort,—not to be deprived of their joy for one single moment of their lives.

Under the word "*peace*," the same idea of God's desire that all His saints should be comforted, or made happy, even in this world, is clearly and blessedly brought out. David tell us that God will speak *peace* to His people. God is

frequently called in Scripture the God of *peace*. “The God of *peace*,” says Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, “be with you all.” In the same epistle he comforts the hearts of the Christians at Rome, by assuring them that the “God of *peace*” would bruise Satan under their feet shortly. He cheers the hearts of the Corinthians by the assurance that the “God of *peace*” would be with them. The same assurance he gives to the saints at Philippi. In his Epistle to the Thessalonians he prays, that the “very God of *peace* might sanctify them wholly.” And he says on behalf of the Hebrews, that the “God of *peace*” would make them perfect. It will have been observed in the commencement and close of most of Paul’s epistles, that as the greatest blessing which he could wish for those believers to whom he addressed himself, he earnestly sought their “*peace*,” which is but another word for “comfort.” Writing to the Romans, he says :—“To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints : Grace to you and *peace* from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.” “Grace be unto you, and *peace* from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ,” are the blessings which he wishes

the Corinthians to enjoy. This is in the beginning of his First Epistle. In the opening of the Second Epistle, we have the same benediction, in nearly the same words: "Grace be to you and *peace* from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ." And in the conclusion of his Second Epistle, the same idea is beautifully and blessedly unfolded. "Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace: and the God of love and *peace* shall be with you."

To the Galatians he says, in the opening of his epistle, "Grace be to you and *peace* from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ." In the conclusion of the epistle we find him invoking the same blessing of peace: "And as many as walk according to this rule, *peace* be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God." He greets the Ephesians in the commencement of his epistle to them, in the same words as he did the churches already mentioned:—"Grace be to you and *peace* from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ." And in the conclusion we hear him saying, "*Peace* be to the brethren." For the church at Philippi, he invokes the same

unspeakable blessing of peace. "Grace be to you and *peace* from God our Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ."

The Epistle to the Colossians opens with the words so often quoted already: "Grace be unto you, and *peace* from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." In the fifteenth verse of the third chapter of the same Epistle, Paul repeats the expression of his desire that the Colossians might enjoy the blessings of peace: "And let," he says, "the *peace* of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful." In the beginning of both the Epistles to the Thessalonians, we have a repetition of Paul's favourite wish: "Grace be unto you, and *peace*, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ:" and in the conclusion of the second of these Epistles, he says: "Now the Lord of *peace* himself give you *peace* always by all means." To Timothy, his own son in the faith, the greeting which he sends in the opening of each of his Epistles is still the same: "Grace, mercy, and *peace*, from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord." Nor had he anything better which he could wish to be bestowed on Titus, his "own son

after the common faith," than " Grace, mercy, and *peace*, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour." His salutation is the same to Philemon, without the variation of a single word: " Grace to you and *peace* from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." The Epistle to the Hebrews does not open with the same words; but at its conclusion Paul prays that the God of *peace* might make the Hebrews perfect to do his will, working in them that which is well pleasing in His sight. And as the " God of peace" listened to and answered this prayer, they must have enjoyed " a *peace* which passeth all understanding." Peter begins his First Epistle to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, by wishing that grace and *peace* might be multiplied unto them. In the beginning of his Second Epistle, there is some variation in the phraseology, but the substance is the same:—" Grace and *peace* be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord." John begins his Second Epistle in terms essentially similar: " Grace be with you, mercy, and *peace* from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the

Son of the Father, in truth and love." And he ends his Third and last Epistle with the words, "*Peace* be to thee. Our friends salute thee. Greet the friends by name." Jude too, in penning the last of the epistolary books, begins with—"Mercy unto you, and *peace*, and love, be multiplied."

I have preferred quoting, in all the cases to which I have just referred, the words beginning and ending the various Epistles I have mentioned—to simply stating the fact, that the words were used by Paul and the other apostolical authors of the Epistles, because I am desirous that believers should be deeply impressed with the sense of the solicitude which God feels that they should be the subjects of "*peace*," or "*comfort*."

But the term "*peace*," always bearing in mind that it is synonymous with comfort or happiness, ought to be especially dear to the Christian's heart, because it was, if I may so express myself, a favourite word with our Lord Himself, when He tabernacled among men. Just before His departure from the world, He left His peace as a legacy to His disciples: "*Peace*," He says, "I leave with you. My *peace*," He added, as if to give

greater emphasis to the word, “ I give unto you ; not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” And He closed His tender farewell address to His disciples in the memorable and blessed words, “ These things have I spoken to you that in Me ye might have *peace*. In the world ye shall have tribulation ; but be of good cheer,” or comfort, “ I have overcome the world.” And on the first occasion, when Jesus appeared to his disciples, after his resurrection, while they were assembled for prayer in an upper room, with the doors shut for fear of the Jews, the words with which their Lord accosted them were substantially the same as the last He had addressed to them : “ *Peace* be unto you.” And after He had shown them His hands and His side, in which were the marks of the nails and the spear,—thereby satisfying them that He was not a spirit, as they had supposed, but their own beloved and adorable Lord,—He said to them a second time, “ *Peace* be unto you.” And yet again, when eight days afterwards, namely, on the following first day of the week, He reappeared to His disciples while they were met for His worship, he saluted them

with the same word, "*Peace* be unto you." And though the words are not recorded which He addressed to His disciples just before being carried up into heaven, and in the very act of being parted from them, there is every reason to believe that amongst the blessings which He was invoking on them at the very moment He was taken from them, was the blessing of peace ; for what could be more probable than that He who had bequeathed peace to His disciples as His best legacy, just before His death, and who saluted them with "*Peace* be unto you," on the several occasions on which He appeared to them after His resurrection,—should leave the world when in the act of blessing them, with the words "*Peace* be unto you," as among the last, if not the very last, that fell from His lips ?

But not only has God in His great kindness provided the means of "*comfort*" for His people, to be rendered effectual by the Holy Ghost, and not only does He by His inspired servants exhort them to be full of comfort,—to which end the apostles so often and earnestly prayed,—but the Scriptures, for our further encouragement, record a great many instances in which the saints of God

in past ages have been filled with comfort and exceeding joy. Let a glance at a few of these instances suffice. In the Acts of the Apostles, we are told, that the early disciples “walked in the fear of the Lord, and in the *comfort* of the Holy Ghost.” Paul, in one of his Epistles to the Corinthians, says: “Great is my glorying in you. I am filled with *comfort*.” And speaking in the same Epistle of some of his fellow labourers as well as himself, he says: “Therefore we were *comforted* in your comfort.” In the Thessalonians he writes, “We were *comforted* over you in all our afflictions.”

Under the word “joy,” the illustrative examples of the great truth that God’s earnest desire is that His people should be comforted, are numerous in either division of the Bible. I will not quote any instances from the experience of David, because his Psalms may be regarded as a succession of songs of joy and rejoicing in God,—songs sung aloud in the seclusion and darkness of the night, and silently in the society and light of the day. Neither will I transfer to my pages any of those other illustrations of the joys of the saints which are to be found in the Old Testament. A few ex-

emphatic from the New Testament will suffice. First of all, let us refer to the case of the two disciples whom Jesus, after he had risen from the dead, met, when on their way to Emmaus. The measure of their joy or comfort was so great, after they had been satisfied that it was with their risen Lord that they had been conversing, that, we are told, they believed not for *joy*. The words convey the idea of a joy so surpassingly great that it cannot be expressed. The disciples, too, who had seen their Lord taken up from the earth as He ascended through the air, to heaven, are described as returning to Jerusalem with great *joy*. See here how speedily the blessing was bestowed, which He invoked on their behalf. While He blessed them, we are told, He was parted from them, and that moment the blessing descended, for forthwith they returned to Jerusalem with hearts overflowing with *joy*, or comfort, or happiness. Very remarkable is that example of the joy or comfort which the early disciples possessed, which is given in the fifty-second verse of the thirteenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, when, at the very time they were obliged to quit Antioch because of the persecution which had

been raised against them, they are described as being “filled with *joy* and the Holy Ghost.” Paul speaks in warm commendation of the Church at Macedonia, because that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their *joy* and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. The same apostle speaks it to the praise of the Thessalonians, that they received the word, even in a season of much affliction, “with *joy* of the Holy Ghost.” To the same Church at Thessalonica, Paul says—“What thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the *joy* wherewith we *joy* for your sakes before our God.” In this place the apostle speaks for others as well as himself, as partakers in common of Christian joy, but in other places he bears ample testimony to his own individual joy or comfort as a believer in Christ. To the Corinthians he says—“My *joy* is the joy of you all.” To the same Church at Corinth he elsewhere says,—“Great is my boldness of speech towards you, great is my glorying of you : I am filled with comfort : I am exceeding *joyful* in all our tribulations.” In another place he expresses an earnest wish, and doubtless a no less confident hope, that he might

finish his course with *joy*. To give only one instance more,—Peter, in his First Epistle, speaks of those Christians to whom he addressed himself, as rejoicing with *joy* unspeakable and full of glory, in that Saviour, whom, though they had not seen Him with the natural eye, they nevertheless loved.

Under the word “rejoice,” which is also synonymous with comfort, we have numerous illustrations of the rejoicing of God’s people in days of old. It will not be necessary to quote any instances, inasmuch as they are not only in most cases to the same effect as those given under the term “joy,” but are in the majority of the cases to be met with in the same passages. The same remark applies to the word “peace.” Besides, we have already extended our quotations on this point to a length which we did not at first contemplate.

I have thus glanced at some of the grounds, as given in the Scriptures, why the people of God ought to seek to enjoy the comfort which it is the special province of the Holy Ghost to impart. There are others which must suggest themselves to every reflecting mind, as arising from the deductions of reason on the subject. Since God

has provided such ample means of consolation for His saints, on their way through a world of sorrow, to heaven with all its happiness, it is obviously most ungracious on the part of His people not readily and gladly to receive the comfort so provided. To refuse to be comforted, when He says "Be ye comforted," is to be guilty of a contravention of the will, and a frustration of the merciful purposes of God towards us. It is, too, to slight that tender affection and profound solicitude which the Lord Jesus exhibited towards all His followers, when immediately before His death He engaged to send the Holy Spirit in the special character of the Comforter. If God and Christ are thus so earnestly desirous that believers should be comforted by the agency of the Holy Ghost, it is not only ungracious and ungrateful, but criminal in the highest degree, not to receive the happiness so provided and so pressed on the Christian's acceptance. It may be that I am addressing some downcast believer who has never viewed his conduct in refusing to be comforted, in this light. Let me therefore press this view of the matter on his prayerful attention, and if so, there cannot be a doubt that instead of "going a

mourning all the day long," his heart will be opened through the operation of the Holy Ghost, to receive the comfort which the Father and the Son are equally anxious that he should enjoy.

It has always seemed to me as an anomaly, or a contradiction, that any real Christian should for any length of time be a stranger to comfort or joy in the Holy Ghost. I can easily comprehend how that the best of believers in those seasons of sore temptation, and days of darkness, which the great majority of Christians more or less frequently have, should lose their assurance of faith, and as a natural consequence be deeply depressed, but that that depression should be the habitual state of mind of any believer, is what I cannot understand. And yet, on the other hand, I cannot doubt that there are among the people of God no inconsiderable number of whom this may be predicated. There are doubting believers. There are Christians of "little faith." Let me say a word, in all tenderness and solicitude, to any such into whose hands this book may come. Why do you doubt? Why is your faith so small, that it is hardly larger than a grain of mustard seed, when you have great and manifold reasons for

being "strong in faith?" Why are your souls cast down within you, when you have so much cause to rejoice with exceeding joy? Only think what God, by His good Spirit, has done for you; what you are; what are the promises which are yours; and what are your prospects with reference to the future. Has not God, in the riches of His grace, converted you from the error of your ways. Has He not renewed you in a great measure in the spirit of your mind; and is not the process of sanctification still going sensibly on in your souls? Does He not, as the God of Providence, watch over you, and protect you by night and by day, even to the extent of numbering the very hairs of your heads? Have you not Him as your Father and your Friend, your Portion and your All? Is not Christ yours, and you Christ's? Has not the Holy Spirit been given you, and does He not habitually and blessedly dwell within you? Are not your names written in the Lamb's book of life? Have you not the most explicit and emphatic assurance, that all things which shall befall you here shall work together for your good? And, last of all, have you not the prospect before you of a happy home in heaven, when a few more brief

years at the most, perhaps a much shorter time, shall have passed away? Why, then, be unhappy? Why not possess the comfort and the joy in the Holy Ghost, which God and Christ have provided for you, and are so anxious you should enjoy?

It is sad, as well as surprising, to think that any believer should be met with, who will by the gloomy and unscriptural views he takes of Divine things, persist in being miserable, when it is God's good pleasure that he should be happy. God means that His people should have blessed foretastes of heaven here on earth, and for this purpose has made the ample provision to which we have referred, and has given the Holy Ghost to abide with His people for ever, that all the means of comfort so provided for believers, should be rendered effectual. The great majority of Christians *do* enjoy this happiness or comfort, by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost in their hearts. And it is God's earnest desire, as it is the fervent wish of those of His people who have most largely tasted of this comfort,—that *every* saint of God and disciple of the Lord Jesus, should be filled with all consolation, ministered to their minds by the Holy Ghost specially sent by Jesus for the purpose.

I can imagine that some of those Christians who are often and much cast down—not so much by reason of the way as of some peculiarity in their spiritual constitution—will say, in reference to the remarks I have just made, “Are believers, then, never to know what sorrow or depression is?” Far be it from me to say, that any saint of God can possibly reach heaven with a perfect exemption from sorrow in every part of his progress thither. All believers must, more or less largely, drink of the cup of sorrow; but then the believer, who receives the comfort provided for him by God, through the agency of the Holy Ghost, will find in his blessed experience, that his joys greatly preponderate over his sorrows. If it be through much tribulation that we must enter into the heavenly kingdom, it is through still greater comfort that that entrance is effected. Every child of God will indorse, from his own happy experience, the truth of Paul’s statement—“For if our sufferings abound, our consolation doth much *more* abound.” In accordance with this, the same apostle could say from his own experience, “I joy in tribulation.” He elsewhere says, that he rejoiced in his sufferings. If he

was at times sorrowful, yet he could add, that he was “*always* rejoicing.” The greatest trials of the believer can be, by the Holy Ghost, and they often are, converted into the means of his comfort. Hence the injunction of the Apostle James: “Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations.” In one word, everything, whether in providence or in grace—everything in the universe of God, except sin—is adapted, as well as intended, through the operation of the Holy Ghost, to minister comfort to the minds and hearts of believers. All things are theirs, because they are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s. How happy, then, ought every believer to be in life! How happy in the prospect and in the hour of death!

CHAPTER XII.

THE DUTY OF PRAYING FOR THE OUTPOURINGS OF THE SPIRIT, EARNESTLY URGED.

IF God has graciously promised to give His Holy Spirit, it necessarily follows that it is our duty most gladly and gratefully to accept the gift. The promise is emphatically and explicitly made in those memorable words of the prophet Joel, spoken directly by God himself: "I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh." In several of the prophets who preceded Joel, God had given the promise of His Spirit; but the promise had, in every such case, a more limited application. It was in reference to particular, individual saints, or to His chosen people, the Jews, that the promise had been made. In this case the promise has a universal application: it embraces the whole human race. Here, then, we have ground on which to stand, when, in prayer to God, we be-

lievingly beseech Him to pour out, without measure, and without reference to localities and countries, His Holy Spirit. And let it never be forgotten, that we have no right to expect the blessing unless we ask for it. I will not venture to say that God never gives a blessing, except in those cases in which He is asked for it. That would be, in effect, to limit the Holy One of Israel; but I repeat, that we have no ground to expect any particular blessing, unless we specially supplicate that blessing at the hands of God. God will have His people to ask for the mercies they need. "For this thing," he says, "I will be inquired of by the house of Israel." And Jesus told His disciples, that they had not particular blessings, because they did not ask them. "Ask," He elsewhere says, "and ye shall receive: seek and ye shall find: knock and it shall be opened unto you."

We have warrant in Scripture to ask for whatever God has graciously promised, and, therefore, would have ample ground to ask of Him the outpouring of His Holy Spirit, inasmuch as the gift of the Spirit is so plainly promised; but we have yet further encouragement to implore the descent

of the Holy Ghost. Jesus said to those whom, on a particular occasion, He addressed when on earth: "If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?"

It is, therefore, the duty—and it is the privilege as well—of the people of God, to ask a larger outpouring of the Holy Spirit for themselves; and also that He may be poured out on the minds and hearts of such as may have been heretofore entire strangers to them. If believers wish to grow in grace, to make progress in the Divine life, and to possess that comfort which it is the good pleasure of God all His people should enjoy—the only way in which these inestimable blessings are to be obtained is by earnestly supplicating a larger measure than you have yet received, of the influences of the Holy Spirit. "Be ye *filled* with the Spirit," is the express command of God. And it was the prayer of Ananias on behalf of Paul, on the conversion of the latter to Christ, that he might be filled with the Holy Ghost. And that prayer was speedily answered; for we read in the thirteenth chapter of the Acts

of the Apostles, in recording an incident which took place soon after his conversion, 'that Paul was *filled* with the Holy Ghost.

But let me now make some general observations on the all-important subject of approaching the throne of grace for the outpourings of the Holy Spirit.

In urging on all who may be led, in God's good providence, to peruse this volume, the duty of imploring the outpourings of the Holy Spirit for themselves and others, let me say with all sincerity, that never did I feel more deeply than I do at this moment, a 'sense of my own inadequacy, not only to discharge that duty as I ought, but even to discharge it in a manner corresponding with my convictions of its transcendent importance. On this subject I feel most strongly, because I am, as remarked in the beginning of this book, profoundly impressed with the belief, that while, next to the Atonement of Christ, the Agency of the Holy Spirit in the work of regeneration, sanctification, and comfort to the believer, is the most important truth in the whole compass of revelation,—the work of the Spirit is overlooked in the present day to a deplorable extent.

It is even, in instances, and that too among those who stand high in the church of Christ, almost entirely ignored. And wherever that is the case, it will invariably be found that personal piety and the comforts of Christianity have well nigh ceased to be exhibited or enjoyed. Without the accompanying influences of the Holy Ghost, the most solemn and searching sermons which ever fell from human lips, will make no more impression on the heart of man than the gently descending dew on the adamantine rock. We may go much further than this, and repeat what was said in substance before, when I remarked, that were one of the highest order of angels among the hosts of heaven to come down to our earth, and address himself for hours together to any of our fellow men, his appeals and remonstrances, his eloquence and his arguments, would all, without the accompanying agency of the Holy Spirit, fall on the ear like sounding brass and tinkling cymbal. Men would remain as unaffected as if they were statues, instead of sentient beings. And so with regard to the reading of the Scriptures. Though they are the Word of God himself, and are regarded as constituting a revelation of His mind and will,

made directly by Himself, through His servants, to men,—yet without the enlightening and applying power of the Holy Ghost, they are a sealed volume,—destitute alike of meaning, of sweetness, and of efficacy.

Let my most earnest exhortation then be, before I close my book, that you who profess to be the people of God, may make it a matter of daily duty to seek, in all things appertaining to the Christian life, that the Holy Ghost may be given you from above, in all His enlightening, sanctifying, and comforting influences. Never take up the Bible without asking the blessing of God's Spirit on its perusal. Pray that its meaning may be made plain, and its truths be savingly brought home to your hearts and consciences, by His illuminating agency and resistless power. And, with regard to other religious books, pray, before you commence their perusal, that the Spirit may preserve you from receiving whatever there may be of error in them, and that whatever accords, in their contents, with the Divine Will, may be largely and eternally blessed to your souls. If I am now addressing any one who may have proceeded thus far in the perusal of this volume,

without having sent up a single ejaculatory petition, or an audible prayer to God, for the descent of the Holy Spirit to make the book an eternal blessing,—let me beseech such reader to pause at this page of the work, and before proceeding further, implore the agency of the Spirit to apply savingly and sanctifyingly to your soul, what you remember of what you have read, and also no less to bless for your eternal good the comparatively few pages which yet remain for perusal. And if this be done in faith and with fervency, who knows but that, in cases where the book has not thus far been of any benefit, nor even produced the slightest impression, it may, even now, prove a source of blessing, for which the reader will have cause to praise God through all time and through all eternity.

To all believers in Jesus, let me also say,—Never engage in any act of private devotion, or in any active service for God or for your fellow men, without having previously prayed for the shedding forth of the Holy Spirit on your minds and hearts. When you fall down on your knees before God to pour out your souls in private prayer to Him, earnestly supplicate the descend-

ing power of the Holy Ghost, and you shall not only find that you are directed to seek those things which will be most conducive to God's glory and your good, but you shall experience an unusual and unutterable pleasure in your devotions. In the discharge, too, of all the active religious duties of life, you will feel a delight which those who practically ignore the agency of the Divine Spirit have never experienced, and never can experience. It is your duty, especially, to pray for the conversion of the unconverted among your nearest relations and most intimate friends. In doing this, let your prayers on their behalf be accompanied by a corresponding example, and by an earnest and unceasing use of all the means in your power which are most calculated to accomplish the saving change which you seek to see produced. And with your prayers and efforts on their behalf, look up earnestly for the outpourings of the Holy Spirit to bless your endeavours, and to fulfil your desires. Do this perseveringly, earnestly, and in faith, and be assured that, in God's good time, you will, at least in some if not in all cases, see your efforts to save souls crowned with success. Let fathers and mothers so pray and so labour for the rege-

neration of their children ; converted children for the conversion of their unregenerated parents ; brothers for sisters ; sisters for brothers ; relations for relations ; friends for friends ; and so on, through all the ramifications of social life. If this be done, incalculable good will be the certain result.

To ministers of the Gospel, let me specially address myself. Never in private engage in prayer for the conversion of the unconverted among your congregations, or for the growth in grace of those who have undergone the great change, without fervently and in faith supplicating the descent of the Holy Ghost, in all His quickening, regenerating, and sanctifying power, to crown with success your desires and efforts on behalf of your people. Ask the direction and blessing of the Holy Spirit when you sit down to prepare yourself for your pulpit ministrations. Pray, when you ascend the pulpit, that you may be aided by His Almighty power, and guided by His unerring wisdom, in all your utterances. Supplicate His blessing on all the exercises of the sanctuary at the close of each service. Ask God to open, by the resistless influences of His Holy Spirit, the hearts of your hearers

to receive the truth which you have proclaimed, in the love of it, and that they may experience it in all its regenerating, sanctifying, and saving power. And while you thus look up to God for the outpourings of the Holy Ghost on yourself and your people, give that place to the Spirit in your pulpit ministrations which He occupies in the Gospel of Christ.

To the members of churches and congregations I would no less earnestly address myself, in connection with the agency of the Holy Spirit. It is your duty—let me beseech you to make it your practice also—to pray especially for those who minister to you in holy things, that the Spirit of God in all His enlightening, sanctifying, and comforting efficacy, may be poured out upon them. Pray thus for your pastors in the seclusion of your closets, at the family altar, and when you take your seats in the sanctuary. And while you pray that your minister may be led by God's infallible Spirit into all truth, and that suitable words may be given him, and an appropriate frame of mind be imparted, while engaged in the delivery of the Gospel message, pray with no less fervour, and in the exercise of a strong faith, that the same Divine

Agent may bring home the message so proclaimed, with saving and sanctifying power, not only to your own hearts and consciences, but to the hearts and consciences of all who are present with you in the house of God. If the ministers of the Gospel and their people would, everywhere, thus earnestly and perseveringly pray for the outpourings of the Holy Spirit on each other, I feel as satisfied as I do of any moral truth in the universe of God, that great and eternal blessings both to pastors and people would be the result. The Holy Spirit could not, indeed, fail to own and bless a joint recognition on the part of ministers and their congregations, of His Glorious Person and Gracious Work, which conferred so much honour on Him, and implied such an implicit dependence on His agency.

But let me further beg that such reciprocal prayers, on the part of the minister and his people, for the outpourings of the Holy Spirit on the church and congregation, may not be confined to the closet or to devotional exercises at the family altar. Let there be meetings in the place in which the church and congregation assemble for public worship, for specially supplicating the de-

scent, in copious abundance, of the Holy Ghost, to inspire a devotional fire where it does not exist, and to fan it into a brilliant flame, where it has already been kindled. To see pastors and people associating together in meetings, for prayer that the Holy Spirit may be given to themselves and to all believers in a far larger measure than before, would not only be a seemly, but a lovely sight,—lovely alike in the eyes of God and of all who have tasted that He is gracious.

Would that any words of mine could prevail on all the Churches of Christ in these realms, and throughout all the regions of evangelical Christendom, to set apart special seasons, at stated and brief intervals, to supplicate the outpouring of the Holy Spirit from on high,—each for themselves and all for each other and for the world. If this were done by pastors and people with perseverance, with fervency, and with faith, we should soon see such a revival of religion as has never before been witnessed in the present or in any preceding age in the history of the Christian Church. We see a wondrous work of God, in the shape of a revival of religion, going on at this moment in America. Where is the believer who

does not rejoice in that remarkable revival of real religion, and thank God for it? But if all the Churches in their collective capacity, believers in their closets, would pray earnestly and in faith for the conversion of the whole world, as well as for a revival of religion where it exists but is in a languid state,—we should soon see even yet greater things than those which are now witnessed on the other side of the Atlantic. God, with all reverence be it said, could not resist such united, universal, earnest, and believing prayer, for the bestowment of His Holy Spirit, in all His convincing, converting, and reviving power. That would be besieging the throne of grace in a sense in which it was never so besieged before. If God has promised to prove Himself the hearer of prayer wherever two or three are assembled together to supplicate His blessing, how could He refuse to listen to the supplications, how disregard the entreaties of the whole of His people, asking with one heart and with one voice, that He would be graciously pleased to pour out the influences of His Holy Spirit on the whole world? Besides, God has expressly promised to hear such prayers, for He has said in a portion of Scripture already

quoted, that He will pour out His Spirit on *all* flesh. Let that precious promise be pleaded by all God's people in the full conviction that it will be fulfilled. And it will soon be seen that God is faithful to this promise, as He is to all His promises. I leave it to the imaginations of my Christian readers to picture to themselves, what a blessed state of things that would be, when the Spirit of God was thus abundantly poured out on all flesh. Then indeed would the world undergo a moral and spiritual transformation, such as has never entered into the mind of man to conceive. Then indeed would the desert rejoice and blossom as the rose, and holiness and happiness acquire a universal empire both in the hearts and in the lives of the human race.

Those who go out on missions of mercy to the highways and byeways, in the humbler walks of life, I would no less earnestly entreat to supplicate with all fervour and in the fulness of faith, the copious descent of the Spirit's influences on the simple addresses they deliver to the careless and the ignorant—on the conversations which they have with the sick or the dying—and on the tracts which they distribute. If this be done habitually

and with a single eye to the glory of God in the conversion of sinners, rest assured that your labours will not be in vain in the Lord.

To Sabbath School teachers I would also address a word or two in connection with the agency of the Holy Spirit. You may sow the seeds of all right principles in the young and tender minds of those who receive religious instruction at your hands. That is a great thing ; it is matter for thankfulness to God. And no one can sufficiently feel what the Christian world owes to you, who devote your Sunday afternoons to the communication of sound Scriptural knowledge to your youthful pupils. But while the Holy Spirit never works except by the instrumentality of Scriptural knowledge, that knowledge is often imparted in the most ample measure, without producing the slightest salutary impression on the juvenile minds by which it is received. The Holy Spirit can alone render the knowledge so communicated effectual. Human instrumentality can bring Divine truth to the mind ; but no other agency than that of the Spirit of God, can cause the truth to reach and affect the heart. Let me then entreat all Sabbath School teachers constantly to

look to God for the outpourings of the Holy Spirit to accompany the instruction they impart.

I have made a passing allusion, in a previous part of this chapter, to the duty of ministers of the Gospel, to impress on their hearers the importance and necessity of looking alone to the Spirit of God for an effectual blessing on all the spiritual exercises in which they engage, and on all the efforts they make to promote the Divine glory, and to benefit and bless their fellow men. This is a matter on which I lay the greatest stress. Let me urge on all who, in God's providence and grace, are called on to proclaim the Gospel message from the pulpit, the absolute importance, if they would witness successful results to their ministrations,—if they would see God glorified, sinners saved, and the saints increasingly sanctified,—of giving due prominence to the doctrine of Personality, the Divinity, and the Agency of the Holy Spirit. Let those servants of God who minister in holy things, who may have been hitherto wanting in their pulpit duties in this respect, only begin now to honour the Spirit by preaching Him prominently, earnestly, and prayerfully, in His Person and Work, and a manifest

and abundant blessing will most surely and speedily accompany their pulpit and pastoral labours.'

Will such of those as may be still in their sins, into whose hands this work may come, permit me a parting word to them? Your guilt is great, and its enormity has been fearfully aggravated by your habitual and resolute resistance of the Holy Spirit. I assume that you are conscious that He has, until the present hour, been striving with you in vain; and because you have not yielded to His gracious influences, but persisted in doing Him despite, He is deeply grieved. Let me say to you with all affection—and I do so on the authority of the Spirit himself, as given in God's Word—that He will not *always* strive with you. Nor do you know that, if you still persist in setting Him at nought, He will strive with you another hour. His language to the Word, to providences, to the Ministers of the Gospel, and to all the means of grace which He delights to honour in the conversion of sinners, may be, before another hour has passed away, "Let him alone." And should that terrible mandate go forth from the Spirit's dwelling-place in heaven, there is no more

hope for you. You are lost for ever. But blessed be God, there is no ground to fear that any such mandate has gone forth. The very fact of your perusing the pages of such a book as this is at least presumptive evidence that you have not yet been given over to a reprobate mind. And if you feel any meltings of heart as you read my words, any sorrow of soul, any self-reproaches that you have so long and so recklessly resisted the Holy Spirit, it is matter of absolute certainty that He has not taken His departure, has not given you up to a reprobate mind, but is still striving with you. But let me implore you to remember that though you may not yet have outlived the day of your merciful visitation, that may be your awful condition, if you defer believing on Jesus, and opening your hearts to the reception of the Spirit till to-morrow. In the inconceivably momentous matter of man's salvation, the Scriptures know of no to-morrow. It is "*to-day* if you will hear His," the Spirit's "voice." And it is not even an hour hence of to-day: it is *now*—this very moment. "*Now* is the accepted time, and now the day of salvation." Never let that solemn and momentous fact pass away from your memories. It is the prayer

of the writer, that it may be fastened in your minds and consciences, like a nail fastened in a sure place. And since the Spirit is still willing to regenerate and save you, and is still striving with you for that purpose, offer no further resistance to Him. You have grieved Him too much already ; grieve Him no more. Remember that it is out of pure love to your souls that He still strives with you. And can you, therefore, in return for His fervent affection, His intense concern for your salvation, persist in resisting His agency, and rejecting the mercy for time and for eternity, of which He seeks to be the messenger to your souls ? That would be to accumulate guilt to an extent which it were unutterably frightful to contemplate. Do not expose yourselves to a peril so appalling. Yield, on the contrary, to the Holy Spirit's solicitations, and obey His injunctions to believe on Christ. Receive Himself as well as the Lord Jesus, and you will at once be made a trophy of His converting power, and, by degrees, of His sanctifying efficacy. And when the Spirit has meetened you for heaven, you will, in due time, be welcomed there. And in that holy and happy place, your souls will unceasingly be overwhelmed with wonder, gratitude,

and joy, at all that the blessed Spirit bore with you, did for you, and wrought in you, during your sojourn on earth. May this be the happy experience, and this the glorious destiny of every reader of this Volume. And should that wish be realised, and that prayer be heard in heaven, both the reader and the writer will rejoice together through all eternity, that ever in God's good providence they were brought into spiritual contact in time.

THE END.

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seeking Jesus, yet I could never look up to God and say, My Father! I often wondered, would God let me die in this state; and many, many prayers have I put up to God about this very thing. But one day, while I was reading this book, I came to the words, "My Heavenly Father;" and as I read them a light seemed to dart into my mind, and with it such a lovely, such a beautiful feeling; it seemed to say, "*I am your Father—your Heavenly Father.*" I put down the book. I fell upon my knees; I felt as if I could weep my life away for joy and gladness, and all I could say over and over again was, "My Heavenly Father—my own dear Father." " "

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